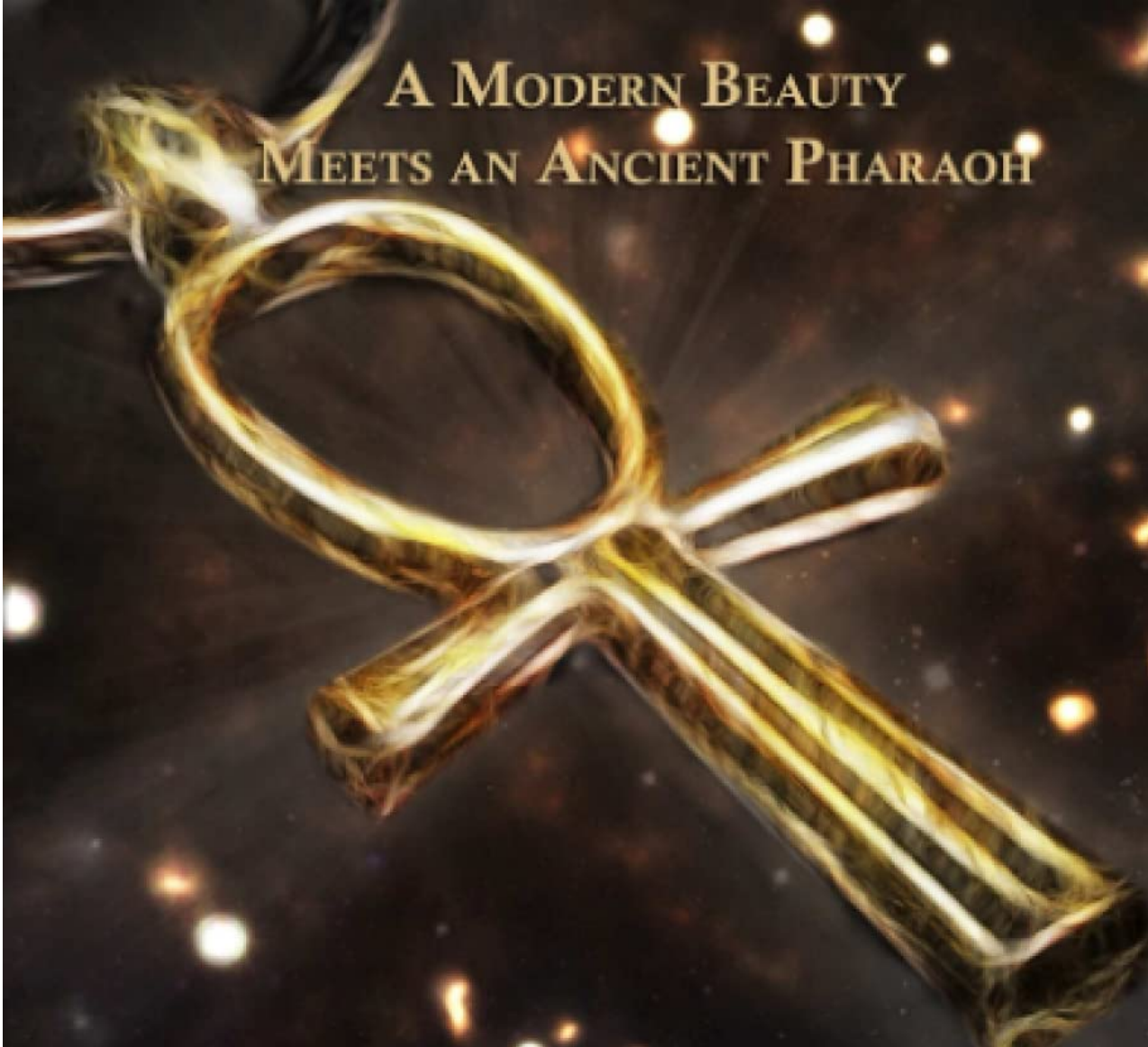




A MODERN BEAUTY
MEETS AN ANCIENT PHARAOH

Beauty
and the
PHARAOH

THANNUJAH MATHIYALAGAN

Prologue

Cruelty is one of the greatest of weaknesses.

That was the one thing I learned from my aunt that I will always remember.

She told me that people were cruel because they lacked the ability to show compassion. They do not know how to love and thus they cannot show it.

It's easy to be cruel. As easy as eating cake, she would say.

But being compassionate took work. And a lot of it. Worst of all, it meant bearing the risk of heartbreak and failure and sadness. It was hard to be compassionate.

However, in her opinion, the ability to show compassion is one of the greatest of strengths.

She was the one who taught me to always be nice. To try and see things from the perspective of others and to never hurt people senselessly.

I am one hundred percent certain that it was this belief system of hers that led her to study the Last Pharaoh of Egypt, Pharaoh Akhenatem.

After getting her PhD in Egyptology and Archeology, she knew exactly what she was going to do. She flew out to Egypt in search for the empty tomb of Akhenatem.

The evil Pharaoh who disappeared, so the story goes.

What my aunty believed was that his own followers murdered him because he was so cruel and his people couldn't take it anymore.

Then Egypt fell because there was no one to take his place.

I knew now that my aunty was wrong.

Akhenatem was not murdered.

His cruel ways got him cursed.

And for some strange, strange, *strange* reason, he found his way to me.

The world works in mysterious ways.

But as I looked at him over my book, watching him play on the floor with my precious Neferkitti, it blew my mind to think that this man was once cruel.

There was a look on his face that somehow made him look... kinda sad. And maybe even pitiful?

Oh god would he freak if he heard me call him pitiful out loud.

But it made me wonder...

What if he wasn't *cruel* per say?

What if he was just... confused?

The Beauty and the Beast was my absolute favourite fairytale... and maybe Akhenatem was just like the Beast. Misguided, confused, lonely and in need of someone to put him on the right path.

But then again, if he's the beast...

Then that would make me Belle.

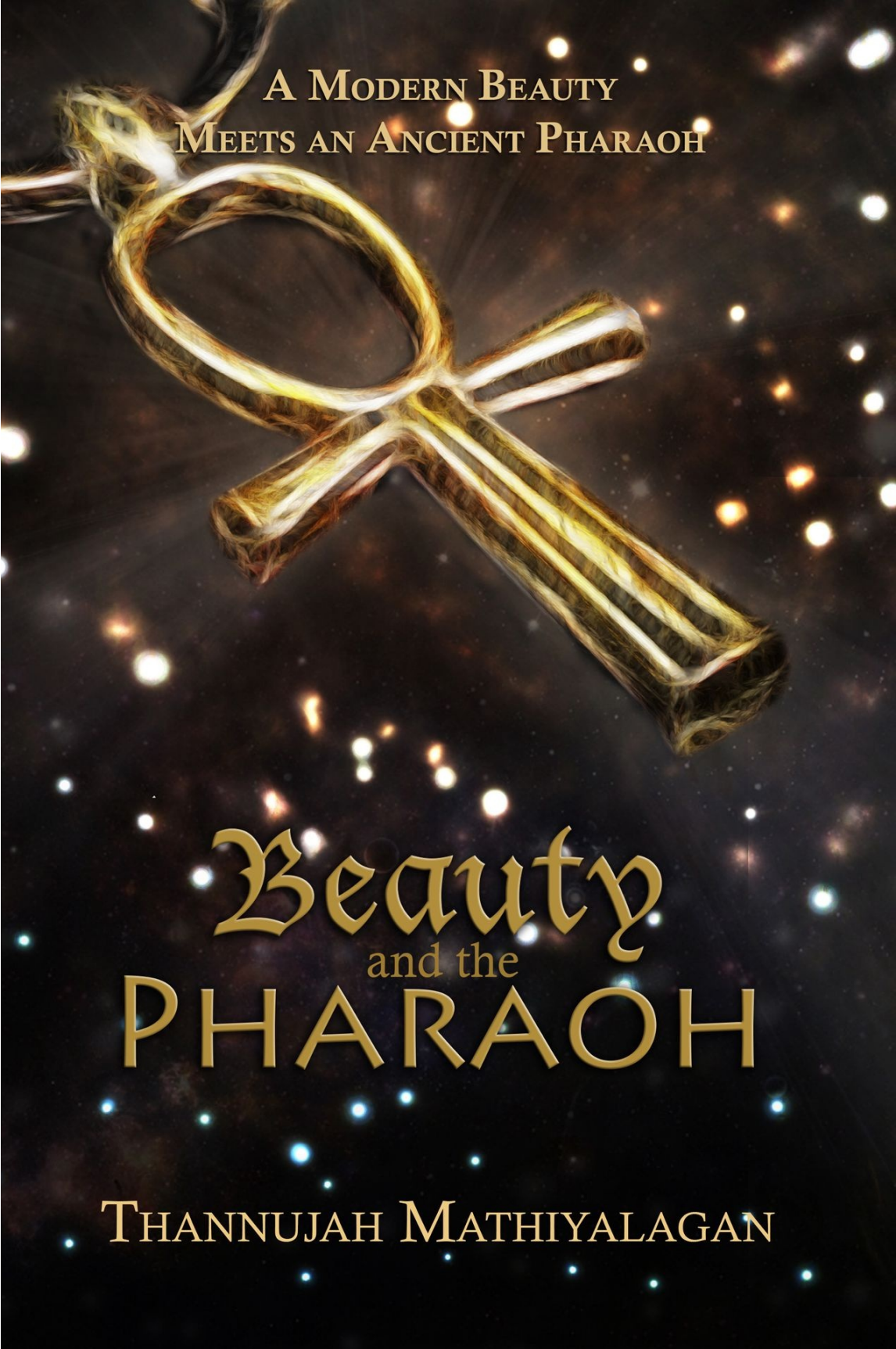
And there was no way that I was Belle. Nope.

No way.





BUYING THE BOOK!



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and the
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THANNUJAH MATHIYALAGAN

HEY GUYS!

Just wanted to let you know that you can purchase an edited, complete version of this story now! YAY! If you would like to buy it (It is currently 25% off!!!!!!), please follow the link here:

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/thannujah-mathiyalagan/beauty-and-the-pharaoh/paperback/product-23823811.html>

(or you can follow the link on my profile)

THANK YOU!!!!!

**Love,
Luckycharms**

The Curse

Cold, collected and calm. That was how he always was, that was how everyone saw him. He looked larger than life as he sat there on his golden throne. It seemed as if nothing in this world could ever hurt him. Not even the gods themselves.

He was handsome too, with his tall stature and medium build. His skin was like copper but his eyes were dark and always glaring.

Some say he never blinked, as even blinking was a sign of weakness.

The mighty Pharaoh Akhenatem of Egypt had no weaknesses.

At least everyone thought he didn't, since no one realized that cruelty itself was one of the greatest of weaknesses.

"Kill him," the Pharaoh said, his deep voice resonating through the halls. "I have no time for such nonsense."

"Without a trial..." one of his court members began to question. His voice trailed off when the Pharaoh shot him an annoyed glance. So he bowed. "As you wish."

The guards grabbed the shouting man and immediately dragged him away. "I'm innocent!" he yelled. "Please! My Pharaoh, *please!*"

King Akhenatem was not fazed by his cries. His mother, however, who stood at his side, turned her head away in sadness.

The Pharaoh stood up. "That is all I will tolerate for today. I'm going to my chambers, do not disturb me."

Everyone bowed and did not move an inch until the king left the room.

He walked down the hall with the usual glare on his face. No one made eye contact with him, not ever, because of that very glare. No one but his mother, of

course, as she was the only one who did not fear him. "My Pharaoh!" She called as she rushed after him.

The Pharaoh did not stop walking. He chose to ignore her until she stepped in front of him.

"Please, listen to me, son," she begged as she took his hand in hers. "This is getting out of control. You cannot just *kill*—"

He pulled his hand away and walked around her. "I'm tired, mother."

"Tired of what?" His mother suddenly cried. "Of *cruelty*?"

He stopped walking and turned around to face her.

"How many innocent people have you imprisoned, Akhenatem." She asked, tears in her eyes. "Now *execution*? The gods will punish you dearly if you continue like this. This is not righteous of a Pharaoh... of anyone!"

"They were not innocent. And I'm simply trying to set an example."

"Who are you trying to fool, my son?" She asked. "Why have you become so bloodthirsty?"

"I do not have time for this," he said as he turned again. She did this almost every night.

"The gods are going to punish you, my son!" She yelled after him. "Please... stop this before they get a chance."

The Pharaoh waved off his mother before entering his room. He let out a sigh, feeling his head start to ache. His mother always seemed to make his head hurt.

He stretched before he walked over to the large table where his jewelry boxes sat, and just as he reached to his ear to remove an earring, he froze. He felt a presence in the room. An unsettling presence.

The Pharaoh turned around quickly, hand over the hilt of his sword which he with him at all times for protection. His eyes scanned the dark room, lit only by the small rays of moonlight that managed to make its way into the large room

through the balcony.

There was no one.

He let out the breath he was holding and moved his hands back to his ears as he turned again to his jewelry box.

And then he saw it.

It was standing right in front of him, forcing him to jump backwards as fast as he could. He pulled his sword out in and pointed it at the hooded man who stood before him. "How dare you enter this room! Who are you?"

The man did not respond.

The Pharaoh had no patience. He lunged forward, and if it were any other man, his attack would have surely hit them, but this hooded man disappeared right before the Pharaoh's eyes.

The Pharaoh stared in shock for a moment, but then he turned around quickly, feeling the man's presence behind him. "Who..." The Pharaoh started.

The man then removed his hood and the Pharaoh stopped breathing. He stared at the bald man, whose eyes were replaced with a blood red glow. "I am here to give you what you deserve," the man said. His mouth did not move as he said it.

King Akhenatem narrowed his eyes.

"The gods refuse to tolerate any more of your cruelty and have sent me to punish you accordingly."

"Do you take me as a fool?"

"That is exactly what I believe you are," he said, his lips curving into a smirk. "You are a fool who knows not how to rule a country. And you do not deserve to take advantage of your position any longer."

The Pharaoh let out an unkind laugh. "I'm going to rip that tongue right out of your mouth."

The man held his hands out, and out of thin air appeared a staff, the top of which was a large stone that glowed the same colour as his eyes. "The gods have asked me to punish you. And punish you I shall."

The Pharaoh scowled as he held his sword out in front of him. He was an excellent fighter and was certain that he could easily take on this man.

"Your country will be destroyed. Its magnificent history will be put to shame when the foreigners invade and turn the great River Nile into a river of blood. And it will all be because of you," he said. "Your men and soldiers will be massacred, your women will be raped and your children will be taken as slaves. And it will *all* be because of you."

King Akhenatem clenched his jaw, lowering his sword.

"How will this happen?" The man asked himself. "You will vanish, leaving this nation with neither a king nor an heir."

"You think you can kill me?"

"No," the man laughed softly. "I do not *want* to kill you. I want to do something even worse."

The King could not help but feel the hairs on the back of his neck stand.

"I am going to send you away," the man said, stepping forward. "I will send you away to a time where family means nothing. To a time where real friendship is a rare treasure. To a time where peace does not exist and citizens live a life of lies, envy, hate and complete ignorance. To a time where trust is unattainable and true kindness is unknown."

The Pharaoh raised his brows.

"And to a time where true love does *not* exist."

Suddenly, the man's staff began to glow brightly as he swung it in front of him. The Pharaoh jumped to attack but everything turned black before he could reach the intruder.

"And to make it all worse..." he heard the man say. "You will live how the

people you rule have lived. Illiterate, hopeless, poor and in a state of constant anxiety."

For the first time in years, the Pharaoh felt fear.

"There is nothing... absolutely *nothing* you can do to help yourself, my King. *This* is your curse."

Before You Continue...

Hi everyone!

Whether you are a new reader or a rereader (YAY!), thank you SO MUCH for choosing to read Beauty and the Pharaoh! I REALLY hope you enjoy it because it was certainly my favourite story to write!

I wanted to take this chance to let you know that though the whole story is available on Wattpad (because I want people to read it, haha), this book IS available for purchase!

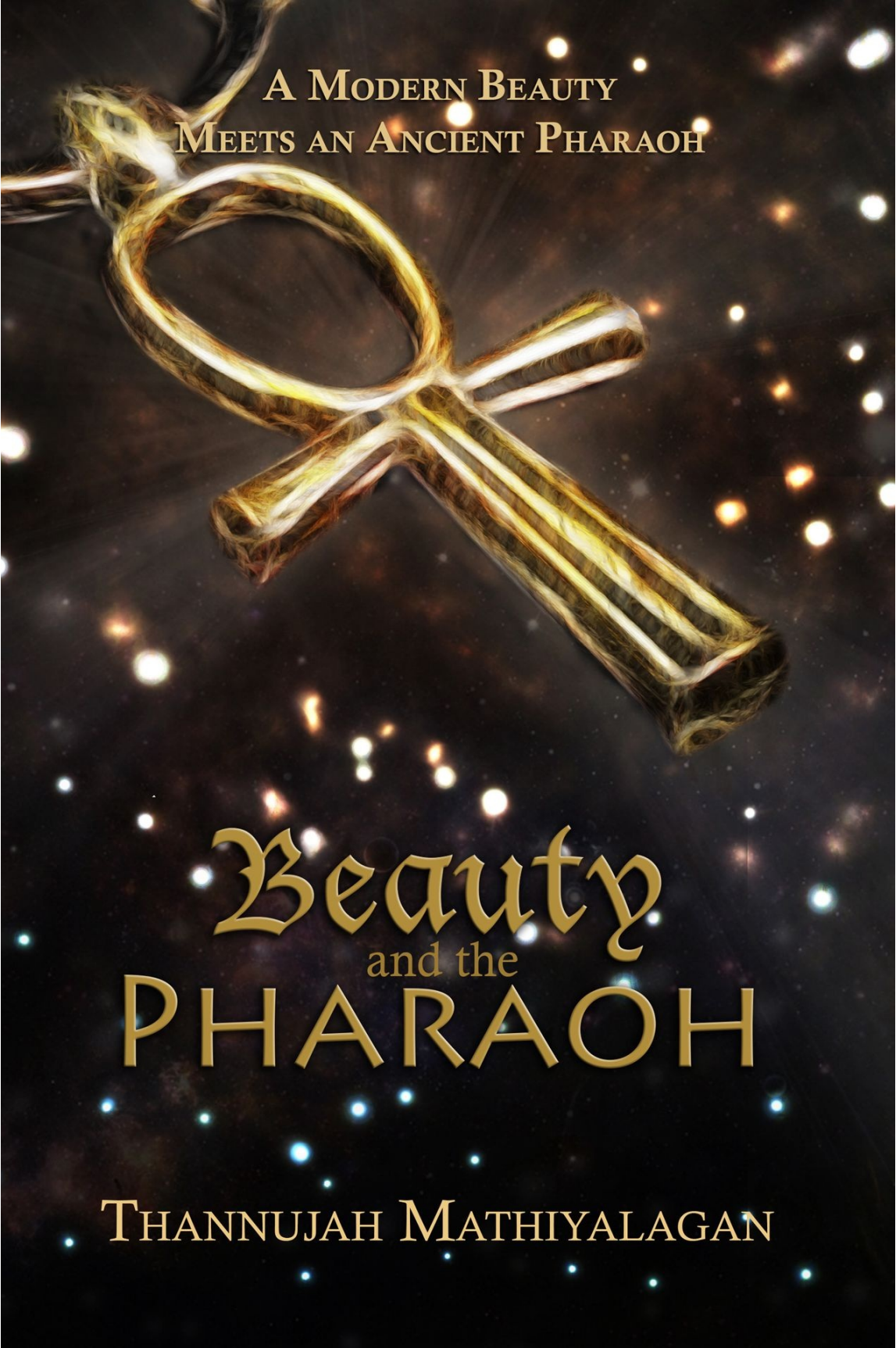
You can get it on Lulu (best price which includes a 20% discount for you guys plus any additional discounts that the website offers) here:

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/thannujah-mathiyalagan/beauty-and-the-pharaoh/paperback/product-23823811.html>

You can also get it on Amazon (though there is no extra discount there):

<http://a.co/d/fXFoFmJ>

If you do end up getting the physical copy, thank you SO MUCH and I really hope you love it!



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THANNUJAH MATHIYALAGAN

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns! And Happy Reading!!!!

Love,
Luckycharms!

P.S. Don't forget to vote and comment! <3 (And Follow <3 <3 <3)

P.P.S. I would love it if you could support my art instagram and follow me at thannu.draws

THANK YOU!!! <3

P.P.P.S. DISCLAIMER:

A note I'd like to add is that this story is not based on any real history (specifically, Akhenatem (my character) is not based off of Akhenaten (the real Pharaoh), they just have similar names, haha!

Furthermore, though I try my best to be somewhat historically accurate when it comes to facts about Ancient Egypt, please keep in mind that this story is entirely fictional. I will for sure twist some facts to suit the story :). Please read with an open mind and also remember that since this is a fantasy, there will be some craziness here and there, haha!

Despite that, I hope you enjoy!! <3

Chapter 1 - [Beauty and the Strange Dream]

"Will you go to prom with me?"

Sparklers sparkled and noisemakers made noise. One of Jake's buddies started to play 'My Heart Will Go On' on his electric guitar and a bunch of other friends unrolled a massive, unimpressive poster, which had the words that Jake had just spoken pasted onto it. Glitter spilled everywhere in the process.

Jake was on his knee with a box in his hands.

In it were very pretty earrings.

Oh. No.

No, I'm not being the one being asked to prom. No, not me, in case you're wondering.

I was just there because the cake that sat on a desk not too far away from the soon to be prom couple was baked and iced by me and I wanted to see what people thought about it.

I was hoping for a "oh my gosh! May made this? It's gorgeous!" or a "May Khan? I never imagined a quiet girl like her would have such talent! Wow!"

But I got neither.

Jake made the request and he paid me forty bucks for the pretty cake. Normally I would have charged fifty for such an extravagant cake with edible pearls all over it but he was broke and I'm too nice for my own good.

Once Annabelle squealed and said her okay, I turned around and walked away.

My cake was getting no attention at all.

When I joined my best friend Aurora in front of our lockers, she greeted me with her usual wholehearted grin.

"Did you see the promposal?" Ugh. I hated that word! It sounded so silly!

My beautiful red haired friend rolled her eyes, "I avoid those like the plague."

And I laughed. This is why we were best friends.

"They're too cheesy for me," she went on, brushing her luscious locks over her shoulder, "But whatever, did everyone marvel at the cake?"

My lips fell into a pout, "nope," I sighed, "I worked so hard. I could have just made it out of Styrofoam."

She let out a small laugh and linked arms with me, "well, if you want I'll force Jake to pay that extra money he owes you." She winked at me.

Aurora was a strange girl. She was super pretty with her real orange-ish, red-ish hair and her vibrant green eyes. Her freckles were perfect and her eyebrows were always tamed and she had a smile that could break hearts.

She was definitely popular girl material.

Instead, she was the kind of girl that kicked ass more than she wore dresses. She was the cool girl.

The cool girl who I was ever so lucky to get as a best friend.

And I knew damn well that she was dead serious when she said she'd force Jake to pay up.

"Please do," I gave her a silly smile and she returned it before the two of us headed home.

It was Thursday, which meant tomorrow was Friday. Obviously. But the reason I say this is because tomorrow was a special day. Tomorrow was my birthday.

Usually I wasn't the type to hype up my birthday... but this year I was turning eighteen. And in this world of mine, eighteen meant I was an adult.

I have been waiting for this day for a long, long time.

After we got home, Ro and I studied for some time and when I was done, I took my contacts out of my eyes as Ro packed up her Chemistry textbook, "any plans for tomorrow?" She asked when she set her packed bag aside.

I looked at her, "nope," I said before removing my makeup with a wipe and then washing my face for extra protection from the horrifying attack of the acne,

"Good," she said, "cause Dom suggested something that I thought would be awesome!"

"Dom?"

Dom was the boy that I had an on again off again crush on. He was also one of my on again off again friends. This was because he had many groups of friends and thus, didn't always spend time with Ro, myself, and our two other girlfriends. So during those times, he was not exactly a good friend. When he did spend time with us though, he was great.

She nodded, "he suggested we go clubbing."

"Clubbing?" I asked, "we can't go clubbing. The minimum age is nineteen, not eighteen."

"Apparently he knows a bouncer who will let us in!"

It was totally like Aurora to not see this as scary.

"C'mon! It'll be fun!" Aurora said with a grin, "there's nothing to be scared about."

I hesitated.

The truth was, I wasn't exactly too scared. Aurora was the greatest friend in the world. She has always been my protector since I met her in the fourth grade. And I knew her... I knew that if anything were to happen she would totally take the fall for me. Not that I wanted her too, but that was the kind of friend I had.

So I sighed, "fine."

"Yeah!" She fist pumped and then hugged me.

And then we spent the rest of the evening finishing homework.

Immediately after she left, I went straight to bed deciding not to wait the extra little while till my birthday.

I knew I wouldn't sleep through it.

So I closed my eyes and was soon fast asleep.

Being in the twelfth grade sucked. A lot. And most people would probably agree with me.

On top of having a life and trying not to be a loser, you had to maintain your grades and do everything you could to get into university or college or whatever else you had planned for your future.

So it was hard for girls like me to get through it.

Why girls like me? Well, I was neither a nerd nor a popular girl. I was the awkward in-between. I was completely average.

I had long, thick black hair that fell to just above my waist. There was *a lot* of it and sometimes it made me look and feel amazing but other times, like when it frizzed, I felt like a complete mess and wanted to chop all of it off.

My eyes were dark brown but when I lined them with eyeliner they looked a shade lighter, which I liked. And unfortunately for me, my eyesight wasn't the best. I wore contacts most of the time but sometimes I walked around with my glasses.

My tanned skin was anything but flawless. I suffered from the typical teenage hormones and thus had to deal with acne, like 95 percent of my school population, of course. Thankfully I was in the later stages so I was at a point where I would only break out here and there during *that* time of month... which was still annoying. But whatever... my slight craze for makeup helped me deal with it and my acne was no longer something that bothered me.

Height wise, I was myeh. I was taller than most girls but not by too much. But I

wasn't skinny. I liked to call myself curvy since I had a wider than average waist and slightly larger breasts. I was definitely happy with my body though. For whatever reason, I never wished for a skinnier body or anything like that. I don't know why but it's never been an issue for me. Thank goodness for that.

But yeah, I was average.

And I was completely satisfied with that.

However, being average didn't exactly help much in your high school life. It didn't harm either. In fact, it just made you normal. You were normal with normal friends and no drama.

The prettier girls always had to deal with drama and problems and though my life was more boring... I was certainly glad to be problem free.

At least problem free in my school life.

At home... life was filled with problems.

My parents were both lawyers whose parents were also lawyers. I wouldn't call our family rich but we were definitely well off.

Now, the problem was that they wanted me to be a lawyer too.

My older brother got it right. He followed in their footsteps and was now in law school in a completely different city.

Me however... no. Law wasn't my thing.

I wanted to do something else.

To be honest... I wanted to be a professor. A professor in evolutionary biology.

I wanted to spend my life studying and learning more and more about something I loved.

Just like my Aunt Maya.

So yeah, life was tough.

But thankfully I knew better than to sit down and simply whine about it. I usually tried my best to deal with my problems, not run away from them. Which was why I was getting along fine in school with good grades and great friends. Plus, though my parents aren't too happy with it, I was accepted into the university I really wanted to go to for Biological Sciences and that meant that I was well on my way. I wasn't running away from my problems, clearly. I was dealing with them... and by dealing with them, I meant doing what my heart wanted me to do, not what my parents wanted me to do.

It was also that very trait of mine which would be the reason my life changes forever.

I knew I was dreaming.

People never believed me when I said this but I always knew when I was dreaming.

I couldn't control my dreams or anything like that but I definitely knew I was dreaming.

And in this particular dream, I was holding my aunts hand and walking in a place that I've never seen before.

The place was filled with sand and the sky was orange. In the distance, I could see pyramids and it didn't take me too long to realize I was in Egypt.

I often dreamed of her reminding me of all the things she taught me as a child. And I loved those dreams because it gave me a chance to hear that musical voice I could never forget. She didn't sing though, but everyone loved listening to her talk because her voice was just so lovely.

This dream started off pretty normal, her voice spoke with love as she held my hand tightly.

A respectable woman should be kind.

She should be brave and observant and smart.

And most of all, she should be loving.

But then she would laugh and add in my favourite part, "however... you should *never* be a pushover. If someone makes you uncomfortable, you make it clear to them that you are uncomfortable. If someone tries to hurt you, you show them who's boss.

"You must speak your mind. Speak it clearly. Being a woman does not make you submissive. It makes you a strong, beautiful human who can do anything she wants."

Then she would tickle me and tell me to kill them with kindness.

Kindness. That's what she stood for.

And... loving yourself.

"Don't ever believe someone who tells you that they are better than you. It's not true. No one is better than anyone. People are too different to compare in that way."

I tried to live by everything she ever taught me.

Sometimes it was hard.

But usually it wasn't.

Today however... in this dream... she said something different to me.

"You have to do the right thing." She said to me with a smile.

I looked at her.

"Something strange is going to happen, princess." She said to me. She always called me princess, "And you have to do the right thing and help him."

"Help who?" I asked.

"A man. He will come to you today and he will be very confused." She kept smiling despite the strangeness of what she was telling me, "you might be scared but you must help him. Okay?"

"Okay. But who?"

"A king?"

I laughed. "A King?"

She nodded.

My laugh faded. "No way."

"Don't be scared, alright?" She continued. "You're the only one who can help him. No one else."

I hesitated. "Okay."

I'd do anything for my Auntie Maya.

My eyes fluttered open.

I was facing my bedside table and on it was a photo of myself and my Auntie Maya.

I took a deep breath.

I dreamed about Auntie Maya all the time. I also had crazy weird dreams all the time. So I just figured that both those genres of dreams decided to merge this time around and I just pushed it aside.

But as I stared at the photo, I felt some sadness deep inside me.

I remembered that my aunt had promised me when I was younger that for my eighteenth birthday, she would take me to Egypt. It was supposed to be a graduation gift too... a gift for getting through one of the toughest times in our lives.

But then she passed away two years ago from a car accident.

When the clock struck twelve I suddenly wasn't as excited as I was earlier today.

Auntie Maya was my most favourite person in the world. She was my role model and my hero. She was everything to me. Plus, since my parents were always busy with work, she was the one who practically raised me too.

I turned around in my bed so that my back faced the photo.

"Happy Birthday, May." I whispered to myself, "You're eighteen. Be happy. You've been waiting for this day for a really long time."

Hello readers!!

Welcome to my new story! I really hope you're looking forward to it!!

I wanted to let you all know here that this is a story that I really wanted to have some fun with... so please expect the coincidences and strange situations [and cheesy romance HEHEHE]! Besides, this story IS a fantasy after all. XD

As you all may have figured out, this is definitely based off of Beauty and the Beast so there will be similar situations between the two stories but at the same time, I wanted to make this story as unique as I possibly could. =D

I would LOVE to hear everything you guys think and please vote if you're enjoying!!!

Lastly, as a way to get the story going, I decided to upload two chapters this week! But starting next week it will be a chapter a week!

Hope you enjoy!!!

Thank you as always for your support and kindness!

Luckycharms



Chapter 2 - [Beauty and the Scary Eyes]

I considered myself a girly-girl... partially because I loved to wear dresses and I also loved makeup. That put me in the category of girly-girl, right?

Unfortunately for me, my girly-girl attire was not suitable for clubbing, apparently.

When I walked out of the washroom in my new, baby blue polka-dot summer dress, Aurora looked at me in shock. "Oh my god, May are you serious?"

I let my hair out of my bun, getting ready to style it, "What's wrong? It's May... the weather's beautiful."

By the way, yes, my parents did name me after the month I was born in.

Lazy, yes I know.

"May, this is *not* clubbing attire! We're trying to look like we're nineteen, remember? Not twelve!"

I could tell that Aurora was trying to hold back her laugh but at the same time, trying to look strict.

"And I knew you would do something like this, which is why I brought you this," she pulled an orange dress out of the backpack.

"It's long-sleeved!" I said as I took it from her and examined it, "I'll sweat like a pig!"

"You'll sweat like a pig no matter what you wear," she said, referring to my crazy sweat glands.

I sighed and turned back into the washroom.

After regrettably removing the dress that my brother sent me for my birthday, I squeezed myself into Ro's dress. She was a size smaller than me, so it was a miracle that I fit into it.

But once I was in it, I was rather impressed. It hugged my curves perfectly, falling to just above my knees. However, the long sleeves were surely going to ruin my night since I could already feel myself starting to sweat, even though I was wearing deodorant.

When I came out of the washroom, Ro looked thrilled, "perfecto! Look at you, hottie!"

I blushed and gave her a silly look.

"Now wear these," she said as she walked over to me and handed me a pair of pretty earrings and a nice necklace. I thanked her, but handed back the necklace. "I'm not changing my necklace, though."

Aurora looked at the ankh necklace that was currently around my neck and remembered that I never took that off. It was a memento of my aunty. It belonged to her and she gave it to me before she passed away.

The Ro chuckled, "oops, I forgot." I knew she wouldn't argue with me on that one.

But after thanking her once more, I rushed to my vanity and began to finish up with getting ready.

I had to borrow my brother's car for the night, since Ro's was currently at the garage. Despite him being in a different city, I still had to ask him for permission and though he was kind of nervous at the idea of it, he let me take it.

And then we were off.

When we got to the club, I was super nervous. I was quite certain that we were going to get into a lot of trouble, especially since Dom told us to just show the bouncer our regular ID.

The bouncer was nothing like I imagined him to be. I imagined a burly, frightening looking man who had no other look to spare except for a glare.

I was right about the glare part... but aside from that he was a normal looking guy. When we showed him our ID, he looked at our face, then our ID, then back at us. Then, he pulled out a piece of paper, held it next to our IDs then handed the IDs back to us.

"Don't cause any trouble." He said as he let us in.

I turned to Ro who grinned.

Unfortunately for me, I just got more nervous.

You probably get by now that I'm a goody-two shoes who isn't really good at doing the typical things that high schoolers are known for doing... like partying and getting involved in drama.

Yeah, I wasn't that type of girl.

But hey... might as well give it a try, right? I was graduating in a couple months, after all. It would be cool to tell some future friends that I may look like a nerd, but I'm totally a rebel.

Ha.

The music rumbled as we walked into the club. It was dark too, which made me have to hold tightly onto Ro's hand as we walked in.

She was looking down at her phone, texting with one hand as she walked and the fact that she easily maneuvered through the sweaty crowd made it clear that she's done this before.

Of course, I already knew she had done this before. I didn't need her awesome club-walking skills to tell me that.

And as I focused on not tripping in these massive heels that I borrowed from Ro, I suddenly heard the voice of someone who I adored.

"Hey!"

When I looked up, I saw Aurora's boyfriend Alec waving happily at us. He was sitting at the bar, two of his friends on one side of him and there were two

seats on the other side of him, probably reserved just for us since the club was so crowded.

When we reached him, he gave Aurora a kiss and then came to me for a tight hug.

Alec was the second coolest guy I knew.

The coolest guy I knew was Blake... but I'll save his story for later.

Alec was a tall, motorcycle riding, half Caucasian, half Korean guy who was just perfect for Aurora. He was super handsome with short black hair and small dark eyes and a heart made of gold.

He was super sweet and two years older than us, studying mechanical engineering at the best university in the country, the same university that Ro and I were both headed too next year. So yeah, he was smart. But to balance out his smartness he was also super fun.

It was funny that him and Aurora got together, since Aurora was more of the blunt, smack-talking, 'Twonttakeyourbullshit' kind of girl whereas Alec was totally patient, totally friendly and totally always getting made fun of by his girlfriend.

But it was obvious that the two loved each other. A lot. Which... I have to say... is something you don't find very often these days with people of our age.

"You're gift is in my car!" Alec said loudly, trying to be heard over the music.

I laughed, "you didn't have to get me anything!" I said, equally as loud.

"Of course I didn't," he grinned, "but I wanted to."

I smiled and gave him another hug.

Aurora was still fiddling with her phone, but suddenly she rolled her eyes and tucked it into her purse. "C'mon, let's dance!" She said to me.

I felt my cheeks slowly start to burn.

Dance?

Me?

Oh goodness, that would be horrifying.

"I'll stay here! Dance with Alec!"

"I want to dance with the birthday girl." Aurora said firmly, pulling me from my seat.

"But Alec will be alone!" I tried.

"No he won't, his buddies are here." She jerked her chin at the two friends who were minding their own business.

Alec laughed, "don't worry about me, May!"

And of course, Ro always got her way.

Soon, I found myself dancing– well, more like jumping up and down –to the music with Ro and surprisingly, it was a lot of fun.

After dancing so much that I wouldn't be surprised if my entire dress was covered in sweat, we finally stepped off the dance floor.

I was laughing with Ro, who had just told off a loser who tried to get our attention, but when we returned to the bar, I was surprised by Dom.

Dom grinned at me and when we reached him, he gave me a hug. "Happy birthday!"

We went to the same school, but Dom was the kind of guy who skipped all the time and made you wonder what on earth he was planning on doing with his life.

That was part of the reason for why my on again off again crush on him would turn off.

He wasn't always like this though.

We knew each other since middle school and during that time, he was a sweetie pie and a half.

But then high school came around and changed him.

High school changes everything.

Anyways, Dom was a cute guy... but his recent newfound love for alcohol (which of course was illegal since he wasn't nineteen yet) and weed (which of course was illegal, period) has made him look... kind of... different.

I could smell the alcohol when he hugged me and I held back a sigh.

Aurora was immediately on his ass for not responding to her texts... and he said that he didn't feel his phone vibrate. And now I knew that Ro was texting him the entire time.

Ro didn't really like Dom aside from the fact that he could get her into clubs and stuff. And it was also obvious that Dom didn't like Ro either. But I knew the two tolerated each other for my sake.

"Come with me!" Dom said over the music, "I have a surprise for you!"

I felt my cheeks heat up slightly before I nodded, looked over at Aurora who nodded as well.

Dom grabbed a hold of my hand and then started to pull me through the crowd.

My feet were aching like crazy at this point and I wanted more than anything else to take off these heels.

But who knows what on earth was covering the floor of the club. So the shoes had to remain on.

I wasn't really worried or anything as Dom tugged me to who knows where. But then when I realized he was taking me outside, I was a little startled.

And then outside I saw someone who I never ever expected to see.

So, let me give you some context.

When my older brother was in university there was a girl who he was dating who another guy named Viktor was seriously into. One day that guy was inappropriate with this girl (who my brother is still with right now), and my brother punched him in the face. My brother got into a lot of trouble for that but apparently, after being punched in the face, the creepo said something along the lines of "imma fuck your sister up for that, bitch."

I knew who this guy was prior to this because I was hanging out with my brother's girlfriend one day and we ran into him.

And when my brother warned me about him, I was terrified.

I couldn't sleep well for weeks. After all, I was only about fifteen or sixteen at the time.

But as time passed, I knew it was all just talk and I started to not worry.

Then I forgot about it.

But when I saw this guy, leaning against the wall as Dom led me to him, I started to panic.

I pulled my hand away and glared at Dom. "Dom, where are you taking me?"

Dom was grinning, he seemed excited, "Vik has been asking me to introduce you to him for a while now—"

"Dom!" I hissed, "he knows me and he hates me!"

Dom was an idiot.

He was one of the many people who I vented too when the entire situation was going on.

He knew that this guy hated my brother, which meant he hated me.

Dom just looked at me confused, "what? No way, don't be dumb. I know you want a boyfriend—"

"What?"

A boyfriend?

He thinks I *want* a boyfriend? I don't *want* a boyfriend!

And even if I did, the guy who he picks out for me is *Viktor*? The mess of a guy who is a thousand times worse off than Dom himself?

"Dom you are such a jerk!"

I didn't know why, but I felt like I was going to cry.

Maybe it was because Dom was too much of an idiot to handle. Or maybe it was because I was worried about what was going to happen next.

But as I turned around and rushed off, my heels clacked hard against the pavement floor, which was probably what made Viktor notice me.

"May!" I heard him call.

I ignored him and kept walking as fast as I could.

"I don't know what's wrong with her." I heard Dom say, "I told you she was moody."

Moody? Ha! That idiot was going to get it with the silent treatment that I was going to give him.

As I walked off, I texted Aurora, telling her that I was heading home. She was infuriated, not at me of course. She knew very well that Dom had done something dumb. Which he had. He had been so inconsiderate. And for some reason, the farther I walked away, the more I realized that he probably didn't care for me at all.

This was probably done to impress the older guy. Not for my birthday. He brought me here to make that other guy happy.

But realizing this pushed away my urge to cry. Instead, I was just mad now.

I swallowed back my anger and annoyance and walked quickly towards the

street that I parked my car at.

Suddenly, my phone started to ring.

I thought it was Aurora, but when I looked down at it, I saw that it was my Uncle Ethan.

I picked up immediately, knowing that his voice would make me feel the relief I needed to feel as I walked down the rather empty streets in the middle of the night in a skimpy dress that totally wasn't my style.

"Uncle Ethan!"

"Hey, princess, happy birthday!" As expected, his voice calmed me instantly. Uncle Ethan was in Egypt right now, working on some sort of project, which I knew he'd tell me all about when he got home.

"I'm so sorry I'm calling so late... my team and I kind of got caved in."

I let out a laugh, he had stories like this all the time, "thank you, uncle Ethan. And that's okay. I'm just glad you called."

"How has your day been?"

"Okay," I lied, "I was just at a party, going to be heading home now."

"Alright, well I won't keep you too long, how about you give me a call when you get home?"

I hesitated, wanting to talk to him a bit longer, but I figured he was busy. "Okay, sounds good!"

I could just imagine him smiling before he surprised me with some strange words, "I apologize if this sounds... strange... but has anything weird happened to you?"

I hesitated again, "um, no?"

Did Don's stupidity count as strange?

"No one strange has approached you?"

I let out a laugh, thinking of Viktor, "No, uncle Ethan..." there was no way he knew that this whole Viktor thing happened.

"Alright, I was just wondering," he suddenly laughed, "I had this really strange dream—"

Aunty Maya suddenly popped up in my head and I froze.

Strange dream?

I had a strange dream too.

And I only just remembered it.

"Anyways, give me a call when you get home. Be safe, okay?"

"Okay, uncle Ethan," I said, kind of flustered now. "Talk to you soon."

When he hung up, I slowly turned around and looked in the direction of the club to where Viktor would have been.

In the dream, Aunty Maya told me that someone would come and need my help. Someone who was scary?

Was she talking about Viktor?

I shook my head, suddenly remember that she said he would be a King and then feeling ridiculous.

It was a dream. I told myself. And there was definitely no way that I would help someone like Viktor.

I had to cross through an ally, which made me feel relieved because I could lose Viktor and Dom and even Ro if any of them came running after me to try and stop me.

But surprisingly, to my demise, just as I turned the corner, I heard Dom call my name.

"May! Hey! Hold up!" He called.

I didn't stop walking, instead, I started to walk faster as I lifted my phone to call Ro... just incase things were to get messy, but then he grabbed my hand.

"Viktor said..." He was drunk, so it took him a second to pick his words. "Why are you acting like this?"

I didn't know what to say.

"Just talk to him! He's coming to talk to you."

Now I was frozen in fear.

All of the horrifying scenarios that I imagined up when I was younger to fit the sentence "Imma fuck your sister up" started to replay in my head.

Could I fight him off?

He was drunk... maybe that meant he was disoriented?

Maybe if I screamed loud enough, someone would hear.

Or better yet, kick him in the balls and then call Ro. She could handle him no problem.

He hesitated. "Listen... he just want to get to know you."

"Maybe another day." I said, my voice shook.

But he grabbed me. "Why?"

"Please don't touch me, Dom." I said, trying to be calm.

"I'm sorry, I'm drunk," he said, "but really, I don't get what the problem is!"

"Let me go." I sighed loudly.

"Don't be mad."

I tried to pull away from him, but he was stronger than I was. "I'll scream if you don't let me go, Dom!"

"Don't be stupid."

"Just go back and have fun!" I tried being reasonable, "I'm going home. We can talk another time!"

"You're such a drag, May. It's your birthday!"

"Well, I'm sorry I'm such a party pooper!" I said as I finally escaped his grasp. "But I'm going home."

He reached out and grabbed one of my arms again and I just as he did I held down to my iPhone button to get Siri to call Aurora. That would be easier than dialing her number right now and Dom would rush off with his tail between his legs if he heard Aurora cuss him off.

But something weird happened.

A bright light started to shine for an instant.

And then I heard a fist punch against flesh.

And when my sight recovered from the bright light, I saw Dom grasping his bloody nose.

I gasped, only then noticing the shirtless man standing between us. "What are you doing?" I yelled as I was going to run past him to Dom.

Yes, Dom was a jerk but I didn't want him to get hurt!

But suddenly, I was pushed back against a wall by a very strong arm.

My head hit the wall, hard, but when I opened my eyes again, I stared in shock.

The sharp tip of a sword touched my neck.

A sword.

A freaking sword.

My glance then ran along the sword and met the dark eyes of the man who

was holding it.

And suddenly, my heart sank.

Never, in my life, have I ever seen a set of eyes that looked so frightening.



Chapter 3 - [Beauty and the Possibly Bad Decision]

I held my hands up and began breathing as slowly as I possibly could in this situation. "Please... put that away..." I begged. "Please."

The man stared at me with those scary eyes. "Who are you?" He growled.

"Me?" I hesitated. "I'm... May. My name is May." I realized that I had to be nice. If I said something stupid, this guy could kill me.

The man looked around right then. He looked everywhere, all around him and even above and below him. "Where am I?" He asked when he looked back at me.

"You're in Oakville. Downtown." *Cooperate. I told myself, that way you won't get killed.*

"Where?" He hissed.

"Oakville." I repeated, trying to remain calm. "A-are you lost?"

His sword pulled away, just a little.

I let out a sigh in relief, and then my eyes fell on Dom, who had a bloody nose and was staring in shock.

Some Knight in Shining Armor he turned out to be.

I looked back at the man. "I... I can try and help you. But you need to put the weapon away."

He kept his eyes on me and then I saw him quickly examine my entire body. Of course, I felt uncomfortable, but I didn't do anything.

Maybe he was checking to see if I had any weapons of my own.

And finally, he lowered the sword.

I then stepped past him and stood between him and Dom, knowing that Dom may have been preparing to do something stupid, like attack the crazy guy with the sword. "Okay." I said, taking deep breaths. "Can you put the sword away?"

The man narrowed his eyes, but when I saw his eyes flicker towards Dom, I realized that he must have found Dom a threat.

"Go, Dom." I said.

"What?"

"Get out of here. This guy doesn't like you."

"And leave you here alone?"

I found it stupid that he wanted to pretend that he needed to, or could for that matter, protect me. "I can handle this!" I said, raising my voice. It was a lie though. I didn't know if I could handle this or not. But here I was, being the hero of the night even after all that happened. "Just go!"

Dom hesitated for just another moment, but then left as fast as he could.

"Okay." I said to the man. "Now, put away your weapon."

He watched me for another moment before he returned his sword to its sheathe that was attached to the belt he was wearing.

When the weapon was finally gone, I sighed in relief and took the moment to really look at this guy.

And god... did I think I was going crazy.

This guy was totally drunk.

I mean, he had to be.

He was wearing a skirt, for crying out loud.

And... all that jewelry and the eye makeup...

Then I finally realized it... he was dressed as an Egyptian Pharaoh... massive crown and all.

He had skin that was the colour of copper and dark, dark, *dark* eyes. The only facial hair he had was a beard that was lined up on his prominent jawbone, but grew long down his chin.

Like a Pharaoh.

Either it was fake, or he worked very hard for this costume.

But he was extremely fit.

So I knew that if I pissed him off and he attacked me... I was done for. There was no way I would be able to break free from his grasp.

And oh yeah, that sword.

I swallowed hard and looked him straight in the eyes. "So... do you know how you got here?"

From what I could remember, he appeared out of nowhere.

"I was cursed." He said. His voice was deep and harsh. "I need to return... I have to kill the man that did this."

Yeah. He was definitely crazy.

So I tried something else. "Where are you from?"

"Egypt."

I took a deep breath. "Egypt."

"Yes, you stupid girl." He hissed. "Stop wasting my time and tell me how I can return to my palace."

"Palace..."

Suddenly, the dream I had last night flashed through my head again.

A King...

I started to wonder if I was already dead. Maybe the psycho Viktor had already killed me and this was all... heaven?

But why would this be heaven? Why would I be standing in front of a guy who looked like an Egyptian Pharaoh in heaven?

I always imagined heaven to be with Aunty Maya.

Not with this guy with terrifying eyes.

But then again, why was I overthinking this? All of it could have just been a dream.

And in all honesty, despite the situation... I kind of wanted to laugh. How was this actually happening? "Listen..." I had to figure something out, quick. "I need you to *give* me that sword."

I decided that I had to disarm him first.

That *had* to have been the smartest thing I could do right now.

"Absolutely not."

"You know very well that I can't hurt you." I said. "But you can hurt me... So just give me that sword and I can hurry up and help you without worrying about my own safety."

My aunt flashed through my mind again.

Someone who was going to scare me...

He took a deep breath, definitely considering what I said, and then he let it out. With that, he removed the sword, sheath and all, and handed it to me.

I sighed in relief. "Thank you." But when he let go of the sword, I gasped. It was *much* heavier than I had anticipated.

But my reaction to the weight of the sword seemed to have reassured him completely that I was no match for him.

I held the probably ten pound sword in my arms and turned around. "C'mon." I was going to take him to the police. They'd know what to do.

When we got out of the ally, I heard him catch his breath.

I stopped walking and turned to look at him.

His eyes were wide as he looked around. "What... what is this place?"

"It's downtown, Oakville." I said.

He looked at me. "Where is this Oakville? East or west of Egypt?"

I looked up to think as a map appeared in my head. "West." I said. "You have to pass the Atlantic Ocean though." I was only answering his questions to make sure that he didn't get pissed off. I felt that that was the only way to get him to trust me.

"An ocean..." He said, shocked.

"C'mon." I said. "Let me take you to my car."

"To your *what*?" He suddenly sounded like he didn't trust me anymore... not that he sounded like he did before.

Was he serious? "Car. We have to use it to get to the people who can help you."

He looked at me for a moment and then didn't ask any more questions.

So I walked him over to my brother's black car.

I pulled my keys out of my black side bag and pressed on a button to open the doors.

The beeping sound that the car made him flinch. "What on earth—"

I walked over to the trunk and opened it, tossing the heavy sword into it. He

watched me with his eyes wide open.

"What is this thing?" He asked, looking angry.

"It's a car." I said. "You have to get in."

"I am not getting into this."

"It's the only way I can take you to the people who can help you." I tried to ignore the eyes of all the people that walked by.

Of course, I couldn't blame them for staring.

He hesitated.

"Don't worry. I'm a good driver." I walked over to the passenger seat and pulled open the door.

He *really* didn't trust this. But after contemplating for another moment, he did as I said.

I helped him put on his seatbelt... which of course, he didn't like the idea of. But when I finally got it on, I closed the door, making him flinch again, and walked over to the drivers seat.

When I turned on the engine, he was startled and I noticed his breathing become quick.

But I didn't care. He was in the car, and now I could get to the police.

The drive was silent, as the crazy drunk guy stared outside the window in shock. And when I tried to ask him questions about himself, he told me to mind my own business and that it wasn't my concern. Even when I asked him for his name.

This guy was weird.

But the farther and farther I drove, the more and more my aunt flashed through my head.

She told me I'd have to help someone.

Someone who is confused.

A King.

Only I could help him.

I swallowed back the weird feeling that was filling me as I reached up and touched my aunties' necklace. It was so weird. It was an urge to turn the car around.

I couldn't go to the police.

They couldn't help him.

And suddenly, I did a sharp u-turn, making the strange man shout in panic. But at the next red light, I connected my phone to the cars Bluetooth and called my uncle. I also noticed at that very moment that I had thirty-two missed calls from Aurora. God, she was gonna kill me.

My uncle picked up immediately.

"Hey Princess," the speakers of the car said in my uncle's voice, "you're home now?"

The man's eyes widened as he looked around the car, "who—"

"Don't worry." I said to him. It didn't help.

"You're a princess?" He asked, almost sounding infuriated.

Wow really? But I ignored that.

"May?"

"Hey, uncle Ethan. I need your help."

"What's wrong?"

"Something really weird is going on."

"What is it, love?"

He said he had a weird dream too, right? "I had a weird dream last night..."

He let out a breath. "And?"

"It was about Aunty Maya."

My uncle hesitated. "And?"

"She told me that there's someone who's going to come that I need to help."

Hesitation again. "Okay."

"Well... I think he's here."

"Who?"

"All I'm going to say is that he's dressed like an Egyptian Pharaoh."

"I am an Egyptian Pharaoh." The man said.

My uncle, who obviously heard the other man, took a deep breath. "Are you serious?"

"Yeah."

"Are you in a car?"

"Yeah."

"Where are you taking him?"

I bit my lip for a moment before I spoke. I hadn't thought of that. But then I let out a breath, "to my brother's apartment..."

"I'm catching a plane to come home tomorrow," he suddenly said, "call Blake. I don't want you alone with the stranger for even a second."

My eyes widened in shock. He wasn't going to *yell* at me for having the weird stranger in my car?

"You knew I was coming?" The man asked.

"No!" I said, quickly. "No."

He hesitated. "Where are you taking me?"

"My uncle knows better than I do. He'll help you."

He narrowed his eyes at me. "You better be able to get me home."

Once I got to the parking garage of my brother's apartment building, the first thing I did was call Aurora.

As expected, Aurora was infuriated. She screamed at me through the phone telling me how worried she was when Dom came running in with a bloody nose.

I explained to her that I was fine and that I would call her in the morning.

And I knew once I called her in the morning, I would get another round of disciplining.

The next thing I did was call Blake, like my uncle had told me to.

Despite all that was going on, my heart still managed to flutter as I dialed his number.

I paced back and forth, waiting for him to pick up, and when I looked back into the car I saw the man just staring at me furiously.

I looked away.

"May?" Blake's lovely voice answered.

I really wished with all my heart and soul that I could just talk to him. Even this morning when he called me to wish me a happy birthday, I was too embarrassed to keep the conversation going past "yeah, I think today will be a great day!"

Blake was my brother's best friend. He was twenty-three and currently working as a police officer. He was also extremely gorgeous with lovely green eyes and dark brown hair that always sat perfectly on top of his head.

He always smiled pleasantly when he said my name and that smile was

enough to make my day.

Yeah, I had a crush on Blake.

So as always, I got all tongue-tied and blurted out something stupid: "There's this crazy drunk guy dressed as an Egyptian Pharaoh I need help with."

I imagined him raising an eyebrow, "do I even need to ask?"

That made me chuckle. "he appeared out of nowhere and looked totally disoriented."

"Wait, you're serious?" Blake sounded worried now.

"Yeah... I swear I thought he was going to kill me with that sword of his—"

"Sword?"

"Yeah."

"Like, real metal sword?"

"Yeah! I managed to get him to give it to me." I said, somewhat proudly. "It's in the trunk of my car. And he's sitting in my brother's car waiting."

"Why is *he* in Marv's car?"

"I was going to leave him... but I felt bad... he's totally out of it. He says he wants to go home but when I ask him where home is, he says Egypt."

"May, are you drunk?"

"No, no! Of course not!" I said quickly, "my uncle agreed to me taking him to Marv's apartment—"

"What?"

Oh god. He probably thinks I'm crazy. I had to come up with something quick. "I think Uncle Ethan knows the guy."

Okay. That was a good lie.

"Is he dangerous?" Blake asked.

Yes. Obviously. But I couldn't say that to him, "no. I don't think so."

"Does he have any other weapons on him?"

"I don't know where he'd hide a weapon in that outfit." I said as I looked over at him. "Unless it's clenched between his butt cheeks under that skirt."

Blake let out a laugh. "God, that guy must be wasted."

"But anyways, Blake, my Uncle asked if you could come over and... I dunno, check him out or something?"

Blake sighed. "I wish I could, May... But it's a Friday night."

Oh yeah. Blake always tells her about those Friday nights. Friday nights were the nights that people went partying. The streets were filled with extremely drunk people that were ready to cause trouble.

Blake was *always* busy on Friday nights.

"The station is literally filled. I'm surprised the guys let me out to talk to you."

I nodded, understandingly. "Then what should I do with him?"

"I suggest you take him to the hospital." Blake said, looking back at the guy. "Whether he's drunk, or out of it, they'll deal with him."

"You want me to just leave him there?"

"May, he's not your responsibility."

"But... I doubt he's just going to sit there and wait for a doctor to call him in. The guy literally thinks he's an Egyptian King of what not." I said, "plus, uncle Ethan might know him"

"So what do you suggest?"

"Nothing..." I said. "I just don't think I can leave him at a hospital."

Blake let out a breath, trying to think of something to do.

"I'll just leave him here... at Marv's place?" I said.

"Don't be silly, May. That's dangerous."

"I could just lock him up in a room until he sobers up. That way he'd have a bed to sleep in. He'd have to sit in a chair all night waiting for a doctor to call him in at the hospital. And with the way he's acting, I don't think he'll do that."

"May, he could be dangerous."

"Or he could be a guy who got a little too drunk and lost his way."

Blake was going to speak but I cut him off, "and Uncle Ethan may know him!" I added, to keep that part of the lie going.

Blake sighed. "You're too nice." He said. "But I don't really think this is a good idea."

"I'll let the neighbors know. If they hear me scream I'll tell them to call the police."

"May..."

But right then, I heard another deep voice, "Fields. I need you back in here. Now."

I figured it was Blake's boss.

According to Blake, the chief was a *very* nice guy... but when he's stressed out, he was always able to transform himself into a total jerk. So I knew I couldn't keep him for too long.

"Don't worry, Blake. I'll be fine."

Blake sighed and nodded. "My shift ends at six in the morning. I'll drop by after that to check on him." He said. "If he's sobered up in the morning, we'll send him off, if not, we'll bring him to the department and figure things out."

"Alright, thanks Blake. You're the best."

"Please don't get too close to him, May. You don't know what this guy is capable of."

"Got it."

I walked back to the car with a slight frown on my face after hanging up. When I opened his door and told him to come out, he glared. "Will I be going home soon?"

I nodded. "But you have to wait... my uncle will be able to help you but he'll only be here in a day or so."

The man scoffed. "Are you crazy? I do not have time to waste."

"You have no other choice." I said. "It's either you wait for my friend or my uncle to come and help you get home, or you go off on your own."

The man kept frowning.

When I finally got him to get out of the car, I made him follow me through the garage and into the elevator.

When the doors opened and closed automatically, he looked startled, "how did you do that?" He hissed.

"Magic." I said, getting tired.

When we made it to my brother's apartment, I opened the door and let him in. I decided not to lock the door, in case I needed to run out.

Though my brother lived in another city right now, he had his own apartment that he used when he was in University. My parents rented it out for a while after he left but recently it's been empty. They decided not to sell it simply because I was going to the same university he went to and so I could use it for myself since it was super close to that university.

And gosh was I excited for that.

"How long must I stay here?" The man asked me as he looked around my brother's nicely decorated home.

"Until my uncle gets here."

His head snapped towards me and his angry glare grew angrier.

"I've got a nice comfy bed you can sleep in for the night. He will be here before you know it."

"I'll slit your throat if the man is not here within two days."

"Right." I said as I walked around and turned on all the lights. *With what? The sword that I locked up in the trunk of my brother's car?*

He followed me.

It was only then that I noticed that he didn't seem to have any problems walking. So at that moment, I started to wonder if he was actually drunk or not.

I started to worry a little bit. But it was too late now.

"Welcome to my humble home." Well, it wasn't my home. Not yet at least. But I felt like saying that.

"It's hideous." He said.

Okay, now that was insulting.

I was very proud of the décor since *I* was the one who arranged everything. Thus it was my pride and joy.

But before I started fuming, I reminded myself that he was either drunk or crazy. "Well deal with it." I said. "And please, take off your shoes."

The man glared. "How dare you. Your home is not worthy of that."

I crossed my arms and looked at him. "This is *my* apartment. And the rules are that you have to take off your shoes at the door, whether you like it or not."

"Do not give me commands. I am the Pharaoh."

"Not in this land you aren't." I said, deciding to play his silly game. "I'll have you know that I'm the princess of Oakville and if you don't follow the rules, I'll call the guards to come and take you." Guards meaning Blake. Of course

His glare grew more aggressive. "Don't make me laugh."

"Well, just a reminder, you don't have your sword anymore." As I said that, from the corner of my eye, I saw my vacuum cleaner sitting in the living room. I walked over to it and picked up the hose. "And this thing here sucks up anything I want it to." I held it like a sword and then turned it on.

The crazy King jumped and held his fists near his face defensively.

When I turned it back off, I smiled, holding back my laugh. "So take off your shoes. And let me show you to your room."

It worked.

When I got him into the room, I brought him a couple water bottles and some snacks to eat. I even demonstrated how to use them.

However, he refused to touch any of it, thinking it was poisoned.

I told him that I would be back bright and early in the morning but he didn't seem to care.

He just reminded me that if he didn't get what he wanted as soon as possible, my throat would be slit.

Before I left, I locked the door and wedged a chair under the doorknob to be extra safe.

And then I just had to hope that this wasn't an elaborate trick created by a robber or a serial killer to get into his next victims house.

But the more and more I thought about it that evening... the more and more I realized that this was a horrible idea. A bad decision. Totally stupid.

Seriously, what was I thinking?



Chapter 4 - [Beauty and the Search for Truth]

I woke up really early the next Saturday morning. Well, to be honest, I had barely any sleep at all. So at five thirty, I was out of my house, driving towards my brother's apartment almost immediately after I woke up.

I spent the entire drive praying that my brothers' place hadn't been completely destroyed or emptied. Praying that I wasn't actually an idiot.

When I got there though, it was thankfully very quiet and everything was in its place.

Since I was early and Blake still hadn't gotten here, I decided to start icing a cake that I had to get done for this evening for a girl who was having her sixteenth birthday party.

Once Aunty Maya realized how good I was at cake baking and decorating, she immediately boasted about it to everyone. Thanks to her, I basically had a part time job where I would bake cakes for people I knew and other people would somehow get my number, give me a call and then ask me to make them a cake as well.

And I loved baking, so I had no problem with it.

I baked the cake last night before we headed out for the disastrous clubbing event, so I brought it, along with all my decorating supplies, with me to my brother's home.

And as I worked on my cakes, Blake, like he promised, walked in through the door just a little bit past six-thirty in the morning.

I felt relieved when I saw him. He was still in his uniform... and though he looked completely exhausted, he smiled at me. "Morning, lovely."—my heart

skipped a beat—"I didn't think you'd be here. You didn't stay the entire night, did you?"

I put down my icing bag and walked around the counter, rubbing my hands on my apron. "No, I drove here a little while ago. Couldn't sleep." I said, tightening my ponytail.

My handsome friend nodded, "I'm sorry I couldn't come sooner—"

"It's fine! Really. He hasn't caused any trouble. Things have been quiet and I actually think he's still asleep. So why don't you take a nap for a bit? My brother's room is still free."

He gave me a grateful smile. "A nap sounds great."

When he got to the room, he fell asleep in an instant. But he didn't sleep for long.

Around seven-thirty in the morning, he was up and ready to get back to work.

He looked a tiny bit fresher now, though he was clearly still tired. Of course, he was still as handsome as ever.

The thing about Blake that attracted me the most was that he was such a *man*. Like, manly man kind of man. He wasn't like the high school boys. Like Dom. Blake was mature, career oriented, sweet and super cool.

He had a light build, which was suitable for a police officer of his age and he was very tall. An entire head and a half taller than me, to be exact. His hair was dark brown and his eyes were a lovely shade of green. He always had a little bit of stubble growing on his face, which added to his manly look.

And the other thing about Blake was that he was so reliable. If he made a promise, he would *always* keep it. Plus, he was always really nice to me. I assumed it was because I was the little sister of his best friend. But nonetheless, ever since we were kids he was always really nice to me.

Oh, and he always smelled really good.

But now wasn't the time to be awkwardly admiring Blake.

So I took him to the guest room so that we could, ideally, finish dealing with the crazy guy. Hopefully he had sobered up and was ready to go home.

Hopefully this whole Auntie Maya dream thing was just that. A dream.

When I got to the crazy guys room, I took a deep breath, pulled away the chair (which, by the way, made Blake let out a laugh) and then opened the door.

I was then shocked to see him sitting up in his bed, looking out the window, his blankets off. He turned when he noticed me.

Blake scoffed, seeing the crazy guy up close for the first time. "Whoa, buddy." He said, walking into the room. "Had a crazy night, didn't you?"

"Huh." The man let out a small laugh, though it didn't seem friendly. "Crazy is an underestimation. Are you the one who will be taking me home?"

"Yes sir." Blake said, giving him a friendly salute. "You can call me Blake. What's your name?"

"You, foreigner, must call me Pharaoh."

My eyes widened. So he wasn't drunk? He was actually crazy?

Now I felt bad.

Now it was rude for me to call him crazy. And I officially started to feel really, *really* bad.

Blake hesitated, probably thinking the same thing as me. "Listen pal, I need your real name if you want me to find your home." He said. "Your full name."

He hesitated. "Horus Akhenatem."

My eyebrows rose.

"Horus is your first name?" Blake pulled out his cellphone.

"First of five."

Blake pressed his lips into a thin line and I held back a laugh. I knew he was

still doing the whole Pharaoh thing. My aunty taught me that Pharaoh's had five names.

And Blake was one of the most patient, friendliest guys I knew. I wondered how long he would last with this guy. "Okay. Tell me your *full* name."

"Horus Mighty Bull of the two Ladies, Horus of Gold, He of the Sedge and Bee, Son of Ra Akhenatem."

It took a lot to hold back my laugh as Blake stared at Mr. Horus the Bee.

"Okay." Blake said. "I'm going to take your picture and take it back to the department to get scanned."

"What does that even mean?" The man asked.

"Look at this." Blake said, pointing at the camera of his smartphone.

The man hesitated, but did as he was told.

Blake quickly took a picture of the wide-eyed man and then smiled at him. "Don't worry." Blake said. "I'll handle it and you'll be home in no time. Just be patient with me."

Before the man could start arguing, Blake grabbed my hand and pulled me out of the room. "I'm going to take this back to the department and try and find out where this guy is from, it shouldn't take too long.

"Maybe you should get a fingerprint too?" I suggested.

He nodded, "good idea."

And then after struggling to get his fingerprint, Blake was off.

As soon as Blake left, I walked up to Mr. Horus the Bee with his breakfast.

Unsurprisingly enough, he had finished all the snacks I had brought for him *and* a couple of the water bottles.

I placed the plate with pancakes, blueberries and maple syrup on the side table and then looked at him. "Do you prefer milk or orange juice?"

His angry gaze didn't falter. "orange juice," he demanded.

"Okay."

His glare remained constant.

"And would you like some bacon?"

"What is that?"

I raised my eyebrows. That was the first time a guy asked me that. "It's pig meat."

"Pig..." He said. "Yes. Give me some of that."

I nodded my head, not expecting a thank you.

When I brought him the bacon and juice, he gobbled it all down quickly, clearly enjoying it. "You must be rich to be able to afford such meat." He said. "I guess you were not lying about being a princess."

I smiled at that. "If you're good, I'll make you a big lunch filled with meat."

He glared at me when I said that, even though I was trying to be friendly.

However, I kept smiling as I turned to leave the room.

I finished the cake that was supposed to be done for tonight so now I worked on another cake which had to be done for tomorrow. But as I leveled the cake, Mr. Horus the Bee finally made his way out of the room and started to look around.

"Your palace is *very* small." The man said as we walked over to the counter. He touched *everything* that he could touch and gave a couple things a knock with his knuckles too. But I had to admit, it was hard to keep a straight face while a shirtless guy in a skirt walked around in front of you.

"I don't know how it is in your lands, but here, the smaller the palace, the richer you are." Yeah, I was still playing his game.

He gave me a skeptical look but didn't say anything else to that. "What on

earth are you doing?"

I smiled. "I make cakes and decorate them."

My response seemed to confuse him. A lot.

"Okay, forget about me." I said, "tell me what happened to you."

The story could be entertaining.

He looked at me with suspicion, but then started to speak. "I was cursed by a powerful wizard and sent here."

"Why were you cursed?" I asked as I continued to ice the cake.

"Apparently I am too cruel."

I let out a laugh and looked at him.

He kept his serious look, which made me stop laughing. "What exactly was the curse?" I asked before I went back to the cake.

"He's going to destroy my country." He said, and for the first time I heard a little bit of worry in his voice. "And to get rid of me he said he would send me to a place with no friendship. A place filled with lies and hate and ignorance and a place lacking trust and kindness."

I started to smile. "He sent you to the right place." I muttered under my breath.

"He said this place would have no true love and that this place is a place where family means nothing."

My head shot up when he said that part and I felt my smile fade.

Something about what he said sounded kind of... poetic.

But my sudden movements made him look at me quickly.

"He got that right." I said to him as I straightened up and turned around to fill my icing bag with more icing.

"Do you live in this palace alone?"

"Mhmm." I nodded. Well, technically I didn't live here. But I would soon.

"Where is the King? And the Queen?" He asked. "Surely they couldn't have left a kingdom in *your* hands, as pathetic of a kingdom as it may be."

"Well, they did. And they're gone." I said, referring to the fact that they actually were always gone. In fact, they were out of the country at this very moment. They weren't even here to share my birthday with me. "Family means nothing here. The wizard who cursed you was smart."

The man just looked at me.

When I turned back around, I decided I wanted to change the topic again. "I really have no idea what I should call you." I said. "What is your name, really?"

"I told you that already. He said, turning his back to me and leaving against the front counter. "And you can call me Pharaoh. That's all you're worthy of."

"Alright, *Pharaoh*," I said as I put my fists on my hips, "why don't you make yourself useful and get some work done for me."

He snorted. "You must be as stupid as you are ugly."

That made me scoff. "Excuse me?"

"Look at you." The Pharaoh said as he gestured at me with his hand. "You're hideous. I can imagine why your parents left you behind."

My jaw dropped.

"You have no grace, you dress like a man, your hair is disgusting, your face is covered in blemishes and not to mention the fact that you smell strange."

I bit my lip so hard that it was probably bleeding.

To be honest, I was rather surprised that I didn't start balling my eyes out right then and there.

Instead, I walked around the counter and over to the door and opened it. "Get

out." I said.

The jerk of a man looked at me in confusion.

"I said *get out!*" I yelled.

He straightened himself up and started walking towards the door. "You can't speak to me like that."

"I swear I'm going to call the police if you don't leave *now*."

"The what?"

"The *freaking* army of my kingdom. Get the *hell* out!"

When he was out the door, I shut it in his face and locked it.

He didn't wait for even a moment before walking away.

Well, at least he was out of my hands now.

So within thirty minutes, I started to feel bad. I mean, yeah, he did call me ugly... but he was probably not well and now he was running around on the streets by himself.

I realized that I was over reacting... it was probably because I was still upset about the whole Dom and Viktor thing. I mean, I was still upset. The current events have kept my mind preoccupied but I was still upset.

I wasn't thinking straight. And I knew I made a mistake.

And just as I finished getting ready to go out and find him, Blake called my cellphone.

When I picked up, he sounded very annoyed. "Why didn't you tell me the guy escaped?" He asked without even saying hello.

I hesitated. "Why?"

"He attacked some bratty teenagers on the street who were apparently making fun of his getup." Blake said. "A lady called the cops and it took six of us to

arrest him."

I bit my lip.

"May, this guy isn't well. You should have told me when he got away."

"He didn't." I said, regretting this even more.

"What?"

"I kicked him out."

Blake groaned. "Why?"

"He called me ugly!" I countered. But then I shook my head. "I'm sorry! I'm coming, give me a couple minutes."

With that, I hung up, locked my brothers' apartment and ran to his car.

The entire drive to the station consisted of me realizing how stupid of an idea this was.

Maybe if I left this guy near the club, someone else would have dealt with him.

But then again, maybe he could have gotten himself killed.

And how could I not think that what I had done not more than an hour ago could have gotten him killed.

Ugh! I was so dumb!

When I arrived at the station, I ran inside quickly and saw Blake in a deep conversation with some of his police buddies.

"Blake!" I called as I reached him.

He turned around quickly and gave me a disappointed look. "May, you should have known better."

"I know, I'm sorry." I said, that look making me feel even worse.

But then he placed a hand on my back and pushed me away from the other officers. When we were far enough away, he leaned down and spoke a little quietly. "Something really weird is going on. There was absolutely *no* match for this guys fingerprints." He said.

I hesitated. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Blake shrugged. "I checked with all the people in this country. I even went into as many mental institutes and tried to match his picture with the people in there. But there was *no* match."

"So he's from a different country?"

"That's the only thing I can think of. And I need special permission to access the fingerprints of citizens from other countries. But it doesn't really make sense, does it? How could he have gotten here from a different country without causing a commotion?"

"So what?" I started. "You think he's a real Pharaoh from Ancient Egypt?" Oh gosh. Oh my gosh.

"No, of course not." Blake said. "I just... I don't know why but something tells me that you should keep him at your place until we figure something out. For the sake of keeping him out of trouble."

I sighed. Blake was probably right. "Are we going to have to pay to get him out?"

"No." I said. "I told the boys that he's a bit out of it. And either way, those teenagers started the fight by heckling the guy. Though he went a little overboard, it could be considered self-defense. We only locked him up because he was resisting."

"Right."

"C'mon." Blake said as he led me to where the Pharaoh was.

In a couple steps, I could here the angry cursing Pharaoh. He was yelling a bunch of nonsense about how the gods were going to punish all of the people involved in keeping him prisoner.

And when I saw him standing behind the bars, holding them with his hands and shaking them hard, I was so tempted to roll my eyes.

He glared at me when he saw me. "You!" He hissed. "This is all your fault!"

I rushed over to him, knowing that I needed to get him to shut up. "Listen." I said, softly. "This is much less than a handful of my entire army."

His glare grew harsher.

"They took you prisoner for your actions... and for what you said to me earlier today." Might as well add that in there. "So listen carefully, *Pharaoh*."

When he looked like he was listening, I continued.

"I *want* to help you. But I can only help you if you *listen to me*." I said. "Will you do that?"

"Why should I trust you?"

"Is there anyone else here that you think you can trust?" I asked. "I think not."

He let out a breath.

"You were cursed because you were cruel. So learn from your actions and *try* to be a bit nicer. I'll do everything I can to help you so long as you do as I say and stop being such a... a..." I tried to think of an appropriate word, since 'jerk' seemed to be a modern word, "a monster."

He stared at me for a moment. "Fine."

I took a deep breath and turned to Blake. "Alright, let him out. I'll take him home."

Blake gave me a pat on my back. "Get him into some normal clothes when you get home." He said to me before unlocking the door.

The Pharaoh walked out silently.

I half expected him to run.

But he didn't.

So I signed a couple papers, accepting responsibility for this guy's actions, which I could thankfully do since I just turned eighteen, and left with the man who was still a stranger to me.

I stopped by a clothing store on the way home, grabbing a pair of the cheapest black jeans I could find and a grey t-shirt along with underwear.

I had to take the guy into the shoe store to get his size, and as embarrassing as it was for me, since he was totally against the style of my 'nation,' and of course his own sense of style which involved no shirt and a skirt, I managed to find some decent priced black sneakers.

When we got back to my place, I was more than a little relieved.

But then I ran into my brother's neighbor, an old lady who awkwardly asked me if the Pharaoh was my friend.

Apparently he was standing in front of the elevator for a good ten minutes after I kicked him out, trying to pry the doors open. Not knowing how to use it. She could hear his cursing and came out to give him a hand.

I honestly had no idea what to say to that. So I forced out a laugh and commented on how much of a joker the idiot was. She laughed too and looked at him... of course, he didn't look pleased.

When I was able to escape the awkward questions, I took him to the washroom and handed him the bag of clothes, leaving the shoes near the door for when he needs them. "Change into theses."

"You want me to wear this?" He asked, shocked.

"Yes." I said. "Get rid of the hat, the skirt, the jewelry, everything. If you want my help, you're going to have to look like a normal person."

The Pharaoh groaned before he grabbed the bag from my hands.

He closed the door and I waited outside.

A moment later, he opened it again. "How do I put all of this on?"

I sighed.

Awkwardly, I pulled out the underwear. "This goes on first. Stick your legs through each hole." Then came the pants. "Pull this over the underwear, pull this zipper up and put this button through this hole." And finally, the shirt. "This goes over your shoulders. Each hand goes into each sleeve and your head goes through this hole."

"I know how to put the top on."

"Good for you," I said. "Now go put the rest on."

He shut the door again, hard. Probably not happy with the disrespect I was giving him.

Well, that's what he deserves for calling me ugly.

It took him *at least* ten minutes to get ready. When the door finally opened again, I was a little taken aback.

When he was dressed like a normal man, I was able to notice that he was pretty attractive.

The pants I had picked out fit him perfectly. But the shirt I got him was a bit tight, that was okay though.

Since his hat was off, I could see his black hair, which was very short, almost completely shaved off.

But he still had all that makeup on, though it was a mess.

He handed me the bag, which was now filled with his heavy jewelry and clothes.

I placed it at a side and then walked past him into the washroom. After turning on the tap and freaking him out a little, I looked at him. "Wash your face."

"If I could kill you, I would." He said, again probably angry over the fact that I was ordering him around. He sounded totally serious.

I smiled. "Well it's a good thing you can't, huh? I mean, your ticket home would be gone."

He clenched his jaw and then walked over to the tap. "What magic do you use to make this happen?"

"I'm a princess that can do a lot of things. But I won't tell you any of my secrets."

He looked at me for a moment and then chose not to argue.

Smart move on his part.

Part of me hoped that my response scared him a little.

He washed all that makeup off, and when he looked up into the mirror, I handed him a towel. "And maybe we should shave off that beard too."

He scoffed. "You're crazy!"

I pulled out a brand new razor, which I had left unused for a long time in his cupboard and some shaving cream. Sure, the razor was for girls but I was sure that it worked all the same on men.

"I will not allow you to cut off my beard."

"You don't have to shave off all of it then. But this goat thing has to go." I gestured at the long mess on his chin.

"No."

"What did I say about listening to me? If you plan on staying in my house, you gotta live under my rules. That means, no long goat beard."

"What is wrong with you, woman?" He asked.

"It'll grow back." I put aside the razor and shaving cream, figuring he wasn't going to shave it all off, and pulled out the scissors. "Stand still."

The man clenched his jaw, clearly holding back his urge to hit me.

And in one, quick cut, the long goat thing was gone.

I cleaned it all up, despite him looking horrified, trimming it here and there and making it look neat.

And soon, as I stepped back to look at my work, I really realized how handsome of a man this crazy guy was.

Too bad he was a jerk.

As most handsome men are, unfortunately.

Except for Blake. Blake was handsome *and* nice.

"Alright, we're done." I said. "Let's go to the living room. You can watch T.V. while I finish up with some more cakes. Then I'll make you something to eat for lunch."

"Do what?"

I sighed, ignoring that and letting him follow me out of the room.

It took me forever to explain what a T.V. was. And once I was done, I was finally left alone to finish my cakes.

Three hours flew by as I worked on my cakes, and when I was done, I realized that I had been so distracted that I didn't look up once. Part of me wondered if he had run off, unable to take my rules.

But I was wrong. I looked up and saw that he was still sitting on the couch, staring at the small flat screen T.V. watching the Spiderman cartoons.

So I left him there, without saying a word and proceeded to make lunch.

My brother's apartment was a large, open room. One side of it had the kitchen and the only separation between the kitchen and the living room was the tall table that sat on the other side of the kitchen counter.

The living room had one giant couch and two love seats that sat on both sides

of the giant couch, facing each other. In front of the giant couch was the coffee table and in front of that was the T.V.

Aside from that, there were a couple decorations to make this place more like a home.

Blake called my phone a couple times as I cooked to check on me, but other than that, it was quiet. Except of course, for the T.V.

At least I knew now how to keep this guy entertained.

When I was done preparing lunch, I saw him looking over at me. "How long do you intend on keeping me here?" He asked.

"Until my uncle gets here and we find out how to get you home," I said. I then started to wonder how much longer it would take for my uncle to get back. It had to be sometime tonight or tomorrow. I hadn't heard anything from him yet so I was kind of left in the dark. "Come here, I've got lunch ready."

He hesitated before he stood up and walked to over to me.

"You can sit right there." I said, pointing at the chair.

When he sat down, I placed a plate in front of him and put the giant sandwich on his plate. "If you want more, just ask."

He hesitated again, and for a moment he watched me as I ate mine before he picked his up and ate his.

After taking a couple bites out of my sandwich, I walked over to my coffee table and picked up my laptop. Then I walked back and placed it on the kitchen counter, opening it up and getting onto the internet.

"What exactly did you say your name was?" I asked, wondering if I could find a missing person's report or something of the sort.

He watched me. "What on earth is that thing?"

"It's a MacBook." I said. "It has all the information in the world and I'm going to try to use it to help you."

"How will that help me?"

"Tell me your name and we'll see if it can."

So he did.

From his entire name, the only part of it that actually sounded like a name was Horus Akhenatem. So I typed the two words into Google.

When I hit search, I froze.

Obviously the Wikipedia page was the first thing that came up. But after that was a couple of scholarly article.

I instinctively touched my ankh necklace. It was an article by Aunty Maya.

It was kind of like I had an epiphany. The memories of her research started flowing back into my head as I stared at her name, which sat under Akhenatem's.

Aunty Maya had gotten her PhD in Egyptology and Archeology. As soon as she got her PhD, she was out to Egypt to research a pharaoh who had interested her since she was a child. Pharaoh Akhenatem.

The cruelest Pharaoh who ever existed.

The Pharaoh whose disappearance led to the fall of Egypt and the massacre of its people by the Ancient Romans.

My eyes flickered over at Mr. Horus the Bee, who was eyeing me suspiciously as always, and then back at my computer.

Aunty Maya studied Akhenatem.

I had a dream with her saying that I needed to help a confused King.

A confused guy claiming he was the Pharaoh Akhenatem was sitting in front of me.

I started to feel dizzy.

Was this... real?

Could he really... be a Pharaoh?

I shook my head vigorously before I let out a breath.

I was going to wait for Uncle Ethan. I wasn't going to allow myself to believe something as crazy as that until Uncle Ethan came home.

So for now, I decided to simply click on the Wikipedia page for Pharaoh Akhenatem.

"Pharaoh Akhenatem." I said, glancing over at the man and then back at the laptop screen. I skimmed through it and just read out the parts that I thought were important. "A Pharaoh that ruled during the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. Inscriptions on tomb walls says that he was a cruel and merciless Pharaoh who ruled with an iron fist. He was feared by everyone because he was unjust and one day he was cursed and he disappeared forever, leading to the destruction of the Egyptians by the ancient Roman Empire since he left no heir to the throne."

His shoulders dropped. "What?"

"Sound like you?" I asked.

He was suddenly silent and looked a little distressed. "Egypt fell?"

"Yeah." I said. "About three thousand years ago, the Romans took over."

"*Three thousand years ago?*" He asked, shocked.

I nodded.

"The man... sent me into the future?"

I wanted to roll my eyes, but I didn't. "I guess so."

He placed a hand on top of his face. "This is hopeless."

Suddenly, something inside me made me feel bad for him. So I looked back down at the screen.

I went back to Google and searched for more information on this Pharaoh. I

was going to read one of my Auntie's articles but after a second of searching, I found something interesting.

A nearby museum was having an exhibit about the fall of Egypt.

Which meant there had to be something about him.

I narrowed my eyes as I stared at the computer screen. This was too much of a coincidence for me to handle.

So I closed the computer screen and called Blake.

While I waited for Blake to pick up, I told Akhenatem or whatever to finish his food and call me when he's done. Then I went into my brother's room.

Blake picked up as soon as he could, and sounded worried. "Is everything okay?"

"I think I might know what's going on." I said.

"What?"

"You know... the people who like... obsess over something so much that they start living it? I've seen it on T.V. before... well, I think that's what's up with this guy."

"What?" He repeated.

"I searched up Akhenatem on Google and a *real* Pharaoh came up." Obviously I left out the whole Auntie Maya thing. I was trying to come up with the most reasonable answer. "Maybe this guy was obsessing over this ancient Egyptian Pharaoh and now he's gone crazy because of it. Like... maybe he's a researcher or something!"

"May... I don't think you should be diagnosing people. You should leave that to the professionals."

I sighed. "I just... that's what I think."

"It sounds believable, May," he said, "but for now, let's just worry about

finding where he's from rather than what he has."

"Right," I said. "I hope I didn't bug you."

"No, you didn't," I could hear the smile in his voice. "Call me if anything happens."

"I will."

And with that, I hung up and decided to go do more research on this Pharaoh.

I wouldn't exactly call myself a geek, but when I saw myself standing in front of the museum, I was strangely excited. It was a sudden plan to go, and I took Akhenatem with me.

But I was slowly wondering if that was a bad idea as I bought the tickets. It seemed like the Pharaoh kept asking me too many questions.

"What is this place?"

"Is it going to help me get home?"

"Why is it so big?"

"Why does it look like this?"

"What is this picture?"

"What are you doing?"

Eventually, I sighed and held my hand up. "Silence," I said. "The Princess demands silence, or we will turn our butts around and go home. "

He narrowed his eyes for a moment, but did as I said.

After buying our tickets, I made my way into the museum, the Pharaoh following behind me. I didn't spend too much time in all those other exhibits;

instead, I went up to the third floor to where the Ancient Egypt exhibit was.

When we walked in, the Pharaoh stopped in his tracks. "This is..."

"A museum," I said. "Archeologists find things from ancient times and display them over here for people to look at."

He walked to the first display filled with golden artifacts. "Disturbing the tombs of my ancestors," he said, looking unbelievably upset for the first time since I met him. "You find pleasure in this?"

"Wait till you see the mummies," I grinned.

His already upset face fell more. "You people have removed the kings from their resting place?"

I walked just a little further into the exhibit to show him the mummy encased in glass.

"No..." He whispered.

Wow. He's so seriously into this.

He placed both his hands on the case and dropped his head as he mourned for an already dead king. As he did that, I walked around and tried to find the information about Akhenatem.

When I finally found the section on him, I crossed my arms and read all the little information boards.

But all these boards seem to say the same thing that the Wikipedia page. Nothing new. Besides, this exhibit seemed to be more about the Roman perspective rather than the Egyptian.

However, when Mr. Horus the Bee joined me again, he looked totally shocked with what he saw.

"What?" I asked, following his gaze to see one of the stone tablets on the wall. "Can you read that?"

Of course, I was just joking around, but he nodded his head and examined the ancient hieroglyphics.

I didn't expect him to actually be able to read it. But then he started speaking.

"It tells the story of the cursed Pharaoh. It's about me."

"Well, I knew that already." He must have read the information boards as well.

The man looked at me. "How is this supposed to help me?"

"Well, I thought we might find something interesting." I sighed and scratched my head. "But I guess I was wrong."

"Stupid girl." He said, crossing his arms.

"Let's just explore." I said, ignoring his comment. "Then we'll go home and try and figure something else out. Maybe Blake found something."

He didn't say anything to that, but did walk around and explore as I suggested.

In all honesty though, this trip seemed to upset him more than I thought it would.

Part of me hoped that it would trigger some flashback of who he really was... if he was a researcher like I thought he was.

But nothing.

So when it was finally time for us to go home, I realized that this trip was total waste of time.

"C'mon. Let's head home."

"What a waste of time."

At least we agreed on something.

"But wait, I need to go to the washroom first."

"The what?"

"The washroom." I said, as I stopped in front of the girl's restroom.

"You're going to wash yourself? Here? I hardly think that now is the time—"

"The washroom, here, means a place where people go to release their unnecessary fluids."

He hesitated, "oh."

I rolled my eyes and turned to go in, but noticed he was following me. "Stop!" I said, holding my hand out. I pointed at the woman sign. "That means girls only."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"Wait here."

He crossed his arms and looked away.

But just before I turned to go use the toilet, I realized something. I turned around and looked at him. "Have *you* not needed to relieve yourself at any point in the last day?"

"Of course I have."

The frown on my face deepened. "And where exactly have you been going to relieve yourself?"

Please not on the couch. Please not on the couch. Please not on the couch.

"In the pots with the plants. It's not like you had anywhere else for me to go."

"*What?*" I hissed, probably looking horrified. "My poor plants!" But then I shook my head, not wanting people to stare at me. "I'll deal with you when we get home." I said as I turned and marched into the washroom.

The first thing I did when I got home was deliver that cake which was for the sixteen year old girl. They loved it so much that they even tipped me twenty bucks. Twenty bucks on a sixty-five dollar cake. That was the best thing that

happened to me since... forever.

Then I rushed home, grabbed all my plants and took them out into the buildings garden. I placed them in a line on the grass and hosed them down as well as I possibly could.

I stood there for half an hour, hose in hand, washing down my poor, violated plants.

The last thing I needed was for these things to thrive off of this guys piss.

When I was done, I left them outside to dry and went back inside to have a talk with the Pharaoh. We had to figure something out.

Telling him to aim his manhood into the toilet when he needed to pee wasn't difficult. But it was hell-a-awkward.

However, as I walked out of the washroom with him whilst tying my hair into a bun, I heard the doorbell ring.

It startled the living daylight out of the Pharaoh, but I walked over to it and looked into the peephole and gasped.

I flung to door open and jumped into the arms of Uncle Ethan.

He let out a laugh, dropping some of his bags and hugging me back, "it's good to see you too, princess."

When I pulled away, I realized that I had never been so relieved in my entire life.

My Uncle Ethan was the husband of Aunty Maya, the younger brother of my mother and also an Egyptologist and Archaeologist. He was young, only recently turning forty, and he looked young too with a medium build and strong looking features. Like me, he had black hair except his was very short and also grew on his face. He had kind eyes that were again, dark brown like mine. And he was tall. Really tall. It was the distinguishing feature about him.

When I let him in, he was obviously greeted by the suspicious glare of the Pharaoh.

My Uncle returned it with a tired smile, which was somewhat hesitant. I noticed my uncle look at what the man was wearing, but he was a smart man and probably figured that I had gotten him out of his Pharaoh getup.

He then looked at me, "I thought I told you not to be alone..."

"I wasn't," I said, "Blake keeps checking on me."

He hesitated but nodded, "I came here straight from the airport," he said, "would you mind grabbing me a glass of water, love?"

Without a word I ran into the kitchen, grabbed him a glass of water and even brought him a bunch of snacks.

My uncle sat on the couch after leaving his bags near the door and looked directly at the stranger, "so you are Akhenatem?"

"Pharaoh, to you, foreigner."

"Right." My uncle said, "Pharaoh. My name is Ethan."

The Pharaoh just nodded, not seeming to care.

After handing him the food and his drink, I sat next to him, "how do you know that that's his name?"

My uncle gulped down the water quickly, then he looked at me. He didn't say anything for a moment but then let out a laugh and a sigh, "your aunty came in my dream as well."

I blinked.

He looked just as confused as I did, "she told me that you're going to need my help because Akhenatem was coming," he shook his head as he spoke, "I had the dream three days in a row... of course, I assumed it was just some silly dream but it still worried me. And now this craziness is going on."

Though the stranger was standing right there, I whispered to my uncle, "do you think... he's really a Pharaoh?"

My uncle looked at me, "no." He said, "I really hope not. I mean, what kind of paradigm shift would befall us if he really was, right?"

I let out a laugh. Paradigm shift indeed.

If this guy was a real Pharaoh... that would mean magic was real... and time travelling was real. It could really happen.

And people in ancient times knew how to do it.

"But..." my uncle continued, "I think there might be a way for us to truly be able to tell if any of this is real or if he's just sick."

"I'm not sick." The Pharaoh finally chimed in.

My uncle looked at him, "please, have a seat," he gestured at the couch beside us.

The Pharaoh hesitated, but sat down.

My uncle got up right then. He walked over to his bag, pulled a bunch of papers out and walked back.

He handed a set of a couple papers to the man and sat down with another set.

When I peeked over, I saw that his was a bunch of random words written down.

When I looked over to the sheet that Mr. Horus the Bee was holding, I saw that it was a bunch of Hieroglyphics.

"Could you read that to me," My uncle said, "tell me what it says, please."

The Pharaoh looked over at my uncle for a moment before looking back at the sheet.

Then... he started saying a bunch of things.

It kind of sounded like a poem. At least, from the way he was reading it. The sentences themselves made no sense to me.

It was kind of like translating French directly into English without changing the order of the words. It didn't always work.

But the more and more he read, the more and more he looked like he recognized what he was reading.

When he finished, both he and my uncle looked flustered.

They were both silent.

I looked from my uncle, to the man and then back at my uncle. I opened my mouth to question what was going on, but my uncle spoke first. "Do you know—"

"My younger brother, Khasekhatem." Mr. Horus the Bee said, looking away, "it's a poem that my brother wrote."

My uncle let out a breath. He scratched his head and then looked at me, "I think... we must prepare ourselves for a paradigm shift."

My eyes narrowed, "what?"

"There is no way that he should have been able to translate this so quickly, let alone know who wrote this," my uncle started, "even for me... for me to translate it would have taken me a *long* time. But more importantly... we *just* discovered this section of the tomb of Khasekhatem. It was hidden behind a thick wall and we only opened it up within the last month. We hadn't even publicized it because it was mostly robbed in antiquity, probably before the wall separating it from the rest of the tomb was put up. But the inscriptions on the walls were left untouched. I copied down the hieroglyphs so I could translate them... but there is no way he could have known that it was written by Khasekhatem... not unless he's read it before—"

Now I felt dizzy.

Really, really dizzy.

"So... you think..."

My uncle bit his lip and then turned back to... possibly the real Akhenatem... "Please... Pharaoh, explain to me what happened to you."

And so Akhenatem repeated his story. He told my uncle that he was cursed and sent into the future because apparently the future was a horrible place to live in (despite modernity and health care, might I add).

When he was done, my uncle sighed. "He basically just threw all of Maya's research down the drain."

I looked at him, "well how was Auntie Maya supposed to know that time travel was possible?"

My uncle smiled.

"So do you think... Auntie Maya actually came to us to tell us to take care of him?"

Uncle Ethan just let out a breath and put a hand on his face. "Well, whatever the case may be... we can't just throw him out on the street to fend for himself—"

"I thought you were going to help me return home!" Akhenatem said rather angrily.

"Well," Uncle Ethan started, "we don't exactly have any means for you to return to Ancient Egypt if that's truly where you are from."

"Then why did you not just say that at the beginning? I've wasted two days with you—"

"What my uncle is trying to say is that he doesn't think you *can* go home," I said. "Even if travelling in time did exist... none of us would have access to that kind of stuff."

"There are no wizards?" He asked.

"No. No wizards, no witches, no nothing." At least, none that I knew of.

He looked furious as he stood up dramatically. "Then I'll figure it out on my own."

"And where exactly do you think you'll go?" My uncle asked, he too looking like he was losing his patience.

"I don't know! But I refuse to sit around and do nothing!"

"But there's no way you're going to be able to survive on your own in this world. We live in a completely different world from what you know... you'd either die or be sent to jail like this morning!"

My uncle looked at me with an eyebrow raised, "jail?"

"I'll explain later," I said.

The Pharaoh's hands balled up into fists, he stared straight ahead at a wall for a while before he let out a breath.

"Okay, how about this..." I started, "we'll make a deal."

Now he looked at me.

"You can stay here... in my brother's apartment. At least until we figure things out here, or at least until you get a better handle of how to act in our time period."

"I cannot—"

"My niece is quite right about the fact that you would not last a day out there alone," my uncle said, "in fact, even we couldn't last outside alone for very long... I suggest you take her deal and at least give yourself and us some time to figure things out."

The Pharaoh looked at him but then let out a breath and looked away.

"But if you're going to live here, in my future apartment, you have to follow my rules." I said, quickly.

My uncle chuckled and the Pharaoh was clearly ignoring me.

"First of all, you have to cut this Pharaoh nonsense." I continued, crossing my arms. "You are no longer a Pharaoh. Not here."

That got his attention.

His glare grew as ferocious as it was when I first met him. "How dare you

even suggest—"

"Nope!" I held my finger up. "My rules. This is my time period. Not yours."

He shook his head, "you foolish girl."

I walked around him and towards the kitchen, "Uncle Ethan, would you like anything to eat?"

"Oh yes, please. I'm starving."

The Pharaoh continued to scoff. And the glare remained on his face for the rest of the evening.

When we finished eating, my uncle and I headed out but only after telling the Pharaoh not to leave the apartment. I even reminded him not to piss in the plants, which I had returned to the apartment.

Since my uncle took a taxi from the airport, I was the one who dropped him off at his own condo, which wasn't too far from my brothers.

On the ride, he told me that he wouldn't be able to stay here for long. He would have to return to Egypt very soon.

"What are the chances that he's just... crazy?" I asked, turning into my uncles' apartment building.

"Quite high," my uncle said, rubbing his temples with his finger and thumb, "I mean, if we act like logical human beings."

I chuckled.

"But... Maya..." He sighed, "that woman always made me think outside the box."

I smiled.

"You know... one time she asked me if I thought that there was a possibility that Akhenatem was *actually* cursed. If he actually disappeared because of magic instead of someone killing him."

"Really?" I parked the car in front of the entrance to his building.

He nodded, "I told her that was ridiculous. But she said that she thought it might be possible. I laughed at her and told her that she's just upset that she had reached a block in her research."

"Aunty Maya would have gone crazy in this situation. In a good way. She would have been thrilled."

He nodded again, "but she would have known for sure if he was telling the truth or not. She would have been able to ask him the exact question that would have gave him away."

"But the hieroglyph thing you asked him was... weird."

"I know. Honestly, if he got that wrong I was prepared to call the police. I had 9-1-1 dialed and ready to call on my phone."

I chuckled.

"But... whether this is true or not... I'd rather you keep your distance from him. If what he's saying is not true then he's probably in need of serious medical aid. If it is true then you must remember that he's got the title of the cruelest Pharaoh that ever existed."

I nodded.

In all honesty, he didn't seem that cruel. I mean, he was definitely a mean jerk. But cruel? Then again, maybe I just haven't gotten a chance to see him like that.

And I hoped I never would.

"Whatever the case... I guess it wouldn't hurt to help someone in need as long as we keep ourselves safe in the process. Your Aunty Maya would be proud whether he was really a Pharaoh or not."

I chuckled and smiled as he leaned forward and kissed my forehead. "Call me when you get him, kiddo." He said when he pulled away.

I nodded.

After pulling his bags out of the trunk, he watched me drive off before he went inside.

And then that wrapped up the long day that I couldn't believe was actually real.



Chapter 5 - [Beauty and the Red Eyed Man]

I got the disciplining of a lifetime on Monday morning. Aurora refused to drop the fact that I hadn't called her, or picked up her calls, at all over the weekend after the birthday craze.

And no matter how much I told her that I was busy, it didn't help.

I *was* busy, though. Obviously, my Saturday was spent with that visiting the police department, going to the museum, delivering cake, washing violated plants then figuring out hieroglyphics and trying to make sense of what was going on.

Then on Sunday, I completely forgot that I had another cake to make, so I spent the entire morning doing that, delivered it at noon... and then went to check on Akhenatem.

He was infuriated over the fact that I had not provided him with breakfast. So to make up for that, since I actually did feel bad, I prepared a big lunch for him. Dinner as well. And breakfast and lunch for the next day. I boxed it all up, put it in the fridge and then taught him how to use a microwave.

It was kind of pitiful watching him though. All he really did while I was there was watch cartoons on the T.V. that he figured out how to use.

I mean, imagine if he really was a king.

How sad was that, going from king to a couch potato?

"Are you listening to me?" Aurora continued as we walked towards our lockers once class finished.

"Yeah, I'm sorry, Ro!" I sighed, "I really didn't mean to not call! I was so busy!"

"I was worried sick!" She said for the hundredth time that day, "and when I went to check on you at home, you weren't even home!"

I stopped walking and then hugged her really tightly, "I'm so sorry!" I said, "I'll explain it all to you soon, Ro, I promise."

Aurora sighed, "Dammit, May. You kill me."

I smiled, finally getting her forgiveness.

"Dom really freaked me out you know? When he told me that he ran off with a bloody nose leaving you with some weirdo. I gave him a black eye for it."

I scoffed, "no way!"

She nodded, "probably why he's not at school today. That or he's getting high somewhere to put out the pain."

I chuckled, "I'm fine, Ro... the guy punched Dom in the face because he thought he was harassing me," I lied, trying to make her feel better, "he didn't mean any harm."

"Well, I guess that serves him right. Dom also mentioned the whole Viktor thing. I slapped him for that."

I burst out laughing.

I realized that Aurora's treatment of Dom was basically abuse and I definitely did feel bad for Dom.

But hey, it really didn't stop me from having a good laugh.

I never bring my brother's car to school and that was because of the fact that there were some mean people in my school who like to scratch up expensive cars. And my brother had a very expensive black Audi A6.

And the car he took with him to law school was his Cadillac CTS sedan.

On top of being very good at saving up money, he was also spoiled very badly by my parents since he followed the right path, in their opinion.

Then there was me.

Taking the bus home.

Not that that was necessarily a bad thing... I kind of liked taking the bus. It gave me time to sit back and listen to music or read, both of which I loved to do.

But it kind of sucked when your bag was super heavy and the weather was excruciatingly hot.

And also when you had to stop by the grocery store to refill your brother's fridge.

Yeah, I was heading back to my brother's apartment this afternoon.

It was partially because I wanted to check on Akhenatem and hope that he didn't end up turning into a robber and robbing the place.

The other reason was because I didn't make him dinner and I felt bad for that.

Gosh was I too nice.

I got off the bus a couple stops early to go to the grocery store, but once I got out I realized that my bag was too heavy and the weather was too hot today for me to carry a bunch of groceries home.

So instead, I bought two large frozen pizzas and hoped that Akhenatem wouldn't mind eating that for dinner, and breakfast tomorrow... and lunch... and possibly dinner for that day too.

Then I left the grocery store and started to walk to my brother's apartment.

And it was almost immediately that I started to feel something weird.

Instinctively, I reached up and touched my Aunties' ankh necklace.

It was kind of the same feeling that made me turn the car around and take Akhenatem to my brother's apartment on my birthday night.

I swallowed back my worry and stopped walking.

Then I cautiously, for whatever reason, turned and looked behind me.

I let out a soft yelp as I saw a strange man standing close behind me. It was kind of like one of those horror movie scenes, where someone would turn around and a ghost would be right behind them.

But what made me turn around and run as fast as I could was the fact that his eyes were red.

Like, everything.

Even the whites of his eyes were red.

My heart raced as I ran down the street, only stopping when I thought he wasn't behind me anymore.

But when I turned back around, I saw that he was indeed following me. He wasn't running though, just walking fast, and wearing some creepy looking brown cloak.

However, that in itself made it all the more terrifying.

This time though, when I turned around to run, I bumped into a stranger.

I looked up at them to apologize and it was a woman, "are you okay, sweetheart?"

I hesitated, then turned around and saw that the red-eyed man had gotten closer.

I saw the lady follow my gaze and look in that direction. I expected her to scream at the sight of that man.

But she didn't. She just looked back at me, confused.

I swallowed back my fear.

She didn't see him?

"I'm fine." I said, before pulling out of her grasp and running off again, pizzas still in the plastic bag on my arm.

I was going crazy.

First the Pharaoh thing...

Now the creepy red eyed man who was following me?

What the hell was going on?

When I finally reached my brother's apartment building, I stopped running and turned around once more.

He was gone.

At least, I thought he was gone.

Because when I turned around to walk into the building, he was standing right behind me.

This time I screamed.

People on the streets turned around and looked but if they were anything like that lady from before, I just looked like a crazy girl.

I pushed him aside and ran towards the building, but he grabbed my arm.

Then I kicked him hard in the knee, making him falter.

I ran into my brother's building, pulling the key from my pocket as quickly as I could while I ran. When I unlocked the second door, I shut it behind me quick and watched as the man tried to pull it open.

I was breathing fast and unsteady as I took a step back.

Then, I turned around and ran to the elevator.

He couldn't get in.

I was safe.

Once I was in the elevator, I placed my hands on the wall and tried to catch my breath after pressing the button to get to the nineteenth floor.

What the hell just happened?

Who the hell *was* that?

I shook my head and rubbed my face with my hands, smudging all of my makeup but not really caring at this point. And when the elevator doors opened, I let out a breath and walked out.

But from the corner of my eye, I saw the same red-eyed man standing at the end of the hallway.

I let out a soft cry, which was supposed to be a scream but it wouldn't come out, and then I ran towards my brother's door.

Just like before, he followed, but walking fast instead of walking.

When I reached my brother's door, I pulled out my keys, fiddling through them, trying to find the key to his door.

Then, of course, my shaking hands dropped the keys. And the man was getting closer.

So I started banging on the door and ringing the doorbell at the same time. "Akhenatem!" I shouted, "Akhenatem open the door! Help! Akhenatem!"

And suddenly I felt myself being aggressively turned around and pushed back against the door.

The man was standing right in front of me, pushing his hand over my mouth, "you should silence yourself," he said with a sour voice, "you do not want to disturb your neighbors."

And just when I was about to finally muster out a scream, the man put his hands around my neck and started to lift me.

Any scream I had was now gone as I coughed.

But just as he lifted me to my toes, I saw the man look past me.

Immediately after, there was an arm around my waist and I was pulled back and thrown into my brother's apartment. I tumbled onto the hard ground and lay there for a second, gasping for breath.

When I looked up, I saw Akhenatem standing in front of me. He pulled the man into my brother's apartment and slammed him against a wall, putting him in a chokehold with both his hands.

I stood up quickly, panicking and not knowing what to do. All I could think of was to remove my backpack so I could run better.

Suddenly, Akhenatem managed to get punched in his face and the red-eyed man escaped the chokehold.

The red-eyed man seemed to come straight at me and I ran into the kitchen, grabbing one of the knives that I had hid in the cupboard under the sink.

But before he could make it to me, Akhenatem grabbed him, knocked him to the ground and got on top of him. Then he commenced the punching.

"Where is my sword?!" Akhenatem shouted.

I swallowed hard, "uh... uh..." Where did I put it? "It's still in the trunk! It's not here!"

"Then pass me the knife!"

I walked over to him, holding the knife in front of me.

And without any hesitation, Akhenatem reached out to grab it.

"Wait! Don't kill him! That's murder!" I shouted, "we have to call Blake! Or the police—"

But before I could even finish, Akhenatem stabbed the man in the chest, *hard*.

I screamed, my hands over my mouth.

But then I noticed something.

There was no blood.

And suddenly, the body turned into a pile of dust and vanished right before my eyes.

I fell onto my knees, eyes wide open as I stared at where the body vanished.

And then I started to cry.

I didn't know how long I was crying, but I had locked myself in my brothers' room and balled my eyes out for what felt like a long time.

I was so confused.

What the hell was going on? What was happening to my life?

Just three days ago I was normal and now there was a possible Pharaoh in my living room and a man made of vanishing dust almost killed me?

What was happening to me?

What was worse was that I didn't want to *tell* anyone about what had just happened. How could I explain that a man was just killed in my brother's living room... and then he turned into dust and vanished?

I shivered.

When the tears finally stopped, I found myself just lying in my brother's bed, staring at the ceiling.

And when I finally turned my head and looked at the time, it was seven-thirty.

I let out a breath and got up off the bed. Then I took a deep breath to fill my lungs back up before I left the room.

I went straight into the kitchen, only glancing at Akhenatem who was not watching T.V. for once. Instead, he was staring into space.

I saw him turn and look at me, but before we could make eye contact, I was looking down at the pizza that wasn't frozen anymore.

I pulled off the cardboard and the plastic, put it on a pizza plate and then tossed it into the oven after turning it on.

It was when I reached into one of the drawers to grab some plates and a pizza cutter that the Pharaoh spoke up.

"He was the man that cursed me."

I froze, dropped the Pizza cutter onto the floor and turned around to look at him, "*what?*"

He wasn't looking at me.

"Why did the man that cursed *you* try to kill *me*? What did *I* do?"

He shrugged.

"So that guy came here... from ancient times... with you?"

"I believe so," he said, "but that does not matter. What does is that he is dead now... and I'm still here." He narrowed his eyes, "I think I am trapped here... forever."

I looked at him.

He actually looked... sad.

I let out a breath and walked over to the couches. When I sat down on the other couch, I took a deep breath and looked him straight in the eye. "So... you're really... an Egyptian Pharaoh who was cursed and sent into the future? Like, *actually?*"

He rolled his eyes, "yes you fool, that's what I have been trying to tell you since I got here."

I just kept staring at him... trying to find a hint of truth... trying to find *something* that would give away *something*.

And the annoyed stare he returned didn't falter. Not even for a moment.

This guy... *was* a Pharaoh.

That was the conclusion I had come to by the end of that day.

I mean... after seeing the red eyed guy... and then have him turn into dust right before my eyes... anything seemed possible at this point.

So yes. Maybe this guy really was a Pharaoh.

But what did that mean for me? What on earth was I supposed to do about it?

The next few weeks went by fairly quickly.

My parents had returned from their trip so I found myself less able to stay out late at night.

Dom had officially apologized for my birthday night, but aside from that, we rarely talked anymore.

Aurora was noticing that I was rather absent these days and started questioning what was going on.

Blake was now under the impression that the Pharaoh was in fact someone that my uncle knew and that he had some troubles with reality. My uncle also asked him to do us the favor of checking up on him here and there.

And speaking of my uncle, he had left for Egypt again.

I still hadn't told him, or Blake, or anyone for that matter, about the guy that turned into dust and the more and more I thought about it, the happier I was that I didn't. He would have been worried sick.

Whenever I went to see the Pharaoh, I usually didn't spend a lot of time there.

He didn't talk to me much.

And I didn't talk to him.

I just made him food and left.

I had already taught him how to use a lot of the household things, including the toilet and the shower and the sinks and the windows. So he really didn't need me there much.

Sometimes I'd ask him if he was feeling okay and he'd just mumble that it was none of my business.

So I'd leave.

I guess it was kind of a good thing, cause that meant he was causing me no trouble.

But one day after school, in the middle of June, I went over to prepare some food for him for the weekend.

It was exam season and I hoped to ace the last exams in my high school life, so I was going to be really busy studying. So I decided to just have a bunch of food prepared so that he'd be able to survive on his own without seeing me for two or three days.

He's done it before, so I knew he could do it again.

But when I got there, I was surprised to see him fast asleep on the couch.

I was going to walk straight into the kitchen, but I hesitated.

And after a moment of contemplation, I took off my shoes and walked over towards him.

Blake had spared some extra clothes for him, as did uncle Ethan. I even went ahead and gave him some of my brother's clothes.

So today, he was dressed in one of Blake's old t-shirts and a pair of his sweatpants that had the logo of the Oakville Police Department on it.

And after examining his clothing, my eyes moved up to his face... and suddenly, my heart got heavy.

Gosh did he look miserable.

Even though he was sleeping, he looked exhausted.

There was a deep frown on his face and his arms were crossed over him and for the first time in a month I finally started to wonder what his life was like right now.

At this point, I had accepted that he was possibly the Pharaoh of Egypt who was cursed and sent to the future.

I had also accepted the possibility that my Aunty Maya really wanted me to help him.

But I had never sat down and really put myself into his shoes.

I knelt down in front of him, still staring at the poor guys face.

And then I started to think.

How would I feel if I was kicked out of my home and sent into a place that was *completely* different?

And then... how would I feel if I was practically locked up in an apartment with nothing to do other than eat and watch T.V.?

No friends.

No family.

No nothing.

And to top it all off... how would I feel if I was a *king* before all of this happened.

Now my heart sank to an all time low.

But then again... he was cursed because he was cruel, right?

Maybe he deserved this?

However... Aunty Maya wouldn't ask me to help someone if it was that simple.

Maybe there was more to it?

And as I pondered the likelihood of there being more to his life than something so black and white... I didn't notice that his eyes were open and he was glaring at me.

When I did though, I blinked.

"What?" He asked, his voice as harsh as ever.

I sighed, stood up and walked over to the kitchen.

Of all the people I knew, I was the best cook of them all. And the only reason I say this is because Akhenatem sure was ungrateful for all the effort I put into helping him.

He sat up on the couch and followed me with his eyes, "I'm hungry."

I rolled my eyes as I opened the fridge and pulled out some tomato sauce to make pasta. "I'm not going to be able to come over for the next two days, so I'll make you a lot of food and you deal with it."

He stood up and walked towards me, "in that case, I'd rather you make me the triangular food which you call pizza. It's easiest to prepare in the heating box."

"The microwave?" I asked.

He blinked, annoyed, "I don't care."

I let out a breath, "well, if that's what you want then I'm going to have to go buy it."

"Then go buy it."

I tilted my head to the side, not liking that he was ordering me around as if I were some maid, "listen here, buddy..." But then I had a great idea, "put on some jeans. You're coming with me."

"Why?"

"Because you've been cooped up in this place for a month or so. You need some fresh air." Might as well take him out for a walk, right?

He stared at me for a moment, "what are jeans?"

"The blue pants."

And to my surprise, instead of arguing he walked towards the guest room, which was where he slept, without arguing with me.

I found myself smiling.

I could instantly see a little bit of improvement in the look on his face from the second we stepped outside of the apartment.

And thankfully, no one spared a single glance for us.

After all, he did look like a normal guy now, aside from the permanent glare on his face.

His hair had grown out a lot now. Almost enough to annoy him, since I caught him running his fingers through it so that it didn't touch his face. Of course, it was still really short since he was nearly bald when I first met him.

His facial hair remained short too.

After dropping by to check on him a couple weeks ago, Blake noticed that his facial hair was a little messy. So Blake taught him how to use a modern razor.

His skin still remained that copper colour, obviously, and eyes were still as dark and as mean as ever.

But yeah, the point was that he looked a lot more normal now.

"Why do you keep looking at me?" He asked.

I looked away quickly, surprised that he noticed my gaze. "How old are you even?" I asked, trying to not be awkward.

"I have lived for twenty-two years." He muttered.

I nodded. He was only a year younger than my brother and Blake.

"Why are you not going to be here for two days?"

"Exams."

He looked at me, "what?"

"Exams." I repeated, "final exams."

"For what?"

"For school."

I had already explained to him how school worked here in our time, since it was apparently completely different from where he came from.

So he didn't ask me to explain any further. It was obvious that he didn't really care.

But once we got to the grocery store, all he did was ask questions.

He had a question about *everything*, including the lights on the ceiling, the packaging and quantity of all the food, and the mist that sprayed on the vegetables to keep them fresh.

Of course, despite my annoyance, I did answer his questions. It was probably because I felt bad.

Thankfully, we got the frozen pizza and we were out of there very quickly.

I made him carry the bags, though he argued with me on that one. However, once I explained to him that he was living at my place without paying any sort of fees, (and added in the semi-lie that men in this world always did things like that for girls) he took them from me.

And while we walked home, I explained to him how cars worked. He seemed really curious about those.

Not surprised.

Boys, right?

But as I was explaining to him that cars did not run on magic, I felt my phone buzz.

"Hold on," I said as I pulled my phone out of my pocket. It was Aurora.

"What is that?" Akhenatem asked as he looked at my iPhone.

I held my finger over my lip and even though he was offended by the gesture, I picked up the call, "hey Ro."

"Heyyyy!" she started, "so, gurl, you're going to love me."

I chuckled, "I already love you."

"Well, you're going to love me more."

"Why?"

"Alec's friend's cat had kittens. She was giving them away and Alec got a hold of one."

I gasped, "no way!"

"And guess what."

"What?"

"Him and I are going to give it to you as a gift! You know, like a second birthday gift."

I stopped walking and started to squeal, making Akhenatem look at me as if I were crazy. I *loved* cats.

But then I stopped and sighed, "but Ro, my parents would never—"

"Keep her at your brother's place! You're moving there in a couple months, right?"

I hesitated, my eyes flickering over at Akhenatem.

"Trust me, cats are super easy to take care of!" Ro said, "tell your parents you're studying at the library and just head over to your brother's apartment to spend time with the kitten!"

I sighed, "but Ro..."

"Okay... fine... if that doesn't convince you then this will..."

I waited for her to speak.

"The only reason why Alec even asked for it is because the breed is an Egyptian

Mau cat!"

I froze yet again.

No. Way.

No. Freaking. Way.

"We all know how crazy you are about Egypt stuff! Alec didn't want to miss the chance for you to get her!"

"Does she have a name?"

"Not yet, gurl! You get your ass over here and pick her up right now!"

I started to grin, "Okay!"

Aurora laughed, "see you soon!"

When I hung up, Akhenatem was staring at me, "what was that? Who were you talking to?"

"It's a phone and I'll explain later," I said as I started to run.

He hesitated, "where are you going?"

When I noticed he wasn't running, I rolled my eyes, "c'mon! I have to hurry! I've got to go pick something up!"

"Pick up what?" He started to walk quickly.

"Do you like cats?" I suddenly asked him.

"Cats? You're bringing a cat?"

I smiled and nodded.

Even he looked taken aback, "cats are sacred."

I grinned and then laughed, "I know!"

When I got to Alec's place, they surprised me with a *beautiful* silver Egyptian Mau kitten with black spots. She was quiet, and looked rather sleepy as she sat in her little box. Aurora had even bought me some cat toys so that the little kitty could have things to play with.

I was going to cry.

"What are you going to name her?" Aurora asked after accepting my very grateful, tight hug.

I had planned out a name for her for a long time and when I told her, both she and Alec laughed.

Aurora insisted on coming with me to my brother's place, but I told her it was fine. I told her that I was actually going to hide her in my room for the weekend and then take her over to my brother's on Monday.

Of course, that was unfortunately a lie.

I just had to keep her away from my brother's place while Akhenatem was there.

So my sleeping kitten and I were driving to my brother's place very soon after picking her up.

When I got there, I walked in through the door only to be surprised by Akhenatem staring directly at me, sitting rather patiently on the couch.

"Do you have a cat?" He asked me quickly.

I found myself grinning at him as I walked over to the living room and sat down on the floor with the box.

My new little kitten was awake now, her bright green eyes wide open as she looked up at me from inside the box.

Akhenatem joined me on the floor, crouching down in front of the box.

And when I lifted the kitty out of the box, I heard him let out a breath and stare at her with almost as much awe as me.

Then she meowed.

I let out a small laugh, my heart skipping a beat as I set her down and began to pet her.

"You can pet her." I said to Akhenatem as he stared at the little animal.

He hesitated, but then reached out and touched her.

The gentle creature made her way towards him and suddenly, the supposed cruelest Pharaoh in the history of Egypt picked the kitten up into his arms and was petting her like a professional.

I stared in amazement.

"Does she have a name?" Akhenatem asked me, rather softly.

I nodded, a smile on my face, "Neferkiti."

He looked up at me right then and surprised me with a snort.

And for the first time since I met him, I saw him smile.

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 6 - [Beauty and the Cake Shop]

I had intended on not coming over at all that weekend because of exams. But because of Neferkiti, I was there from sunrise to sunset.

Taking in Neferkiti was an amazing idea... firstly because she was the absolute cutest, most gentle kitten I have ever met.

Secondly... Akhenatem very well liked Neferkiti. Which meant that now he had company when I was gone. It was better than him being lonely, right?

Plus, I was one hundred percent certain that he liked her more than he liked me. One thousand percent certain, actually.

But... that was a good thing. Because that meant he spent a lot of time with her.

And even though I was really jealous at the amount of time the two were spending together... I *did* have to study for exams, and Neferkiti being clingy with me would only distract me.

So I sat in my brother's living room, my books scattered across the coffee table while Akhenatem played with Neferkiti.

I tried to ignore the two because my jealousy was overwhelming, so I used my book to hide them from my view.

But Neferkiti's meows and Akhenatem's amused huffs were impossible to ignore.

So I looked at them over my book, watching Akhenatem play on the floor with my precious little Neferkiti and suddenly, I realized something.

It blew my mind to think that this man was possibly once cruel.

There was a look on his face that somehow made him look... kinda sad. And maybe even pitiful?

Oh god would he freak if he heard me call him pitiful out loud.

But it made me wonder...

What if he wasn't *cruel* per say?

What if he was just... confused?

"Why do you study so hard?" He asked, startling me from my deep thinking.

When I looked at him, I saw that he was looking at me.

"Erm..." I hesitated, "cause I have to pass my exams."

"And then what?"

"And then do well in University."

"What's that?"

"A higher education." Right?

"Then what?"

My lip twitched. Here he goes again with the questions. "Then I get a job."

"Why waste your time studying? Why don't you go get a job now?"

"Because that's not how it works here. A lot of the jobs requires that you have an education of some sort past high school."

"It seems like a waste of time to me."

"But... learning isn't a waste of time," I argued. I loved to learn. A lot. It was the exams and tests that annoyed me though.

He shrugged, looking back at Neferkiti now, "what job do you want to have?"

"Not really sure yet." I said, simply, "I plan on deciding that afterwards."

"After your higher education?"

I nodded.

He nodded too, "I see."

When he didn't continue speaking, I went back to reading my textbook.

"What kinds of things do you learn?" He asked, suddenly.

I put my textbook down on the table and then pointed at all of the books scattered around, "these kinds of things."

He narrowed his eyes and looked at the books, "You learn about moss?" He asked, sounding rather humored as he pointed at my biology textbook which had a cover filled with green neurons.

I chuckled, "no. Well, not really. That's not moss though. That's neurons. It's biology."

"Biology?"

"The study of living things."

He turned around to face me completely, Neferkiti still in his lap. Without my permission, he opened up the textbook to a random page.

He ended up finding himself in the chapter on evolution. "You learn about monkeys?"

"Sort of," I said.

"Monkeys are sacred to Egypt. Like cats. I see the value in learning about them."

I tried to hold back my laugh as he continued to flip through the textbook.

When he got to the genetics section, he stared at the page with utter confusion. He pointed at a picture of DNA, "what the hell is this creature?"

I laughed, "that's not a creature, that's DNA." I pointed at the title of the unit. "It's inside all of us."

He scoffed, "that's ridiculous."

"Maybe in your time, but not in ours. Our DNA makes us who we are," I pointed at a little thought bubble at the bottom of the page that summarized what DNA was, "see?"

"What does that say?"

I looked at him, "I may cook for you, but I'm not going to read for you," I said, sounding annoyed.

He looked at me, "fool, I *can't* read it. I don't know your language."

My eyes widened, "really?"

It seemed that originally he didn't care, but now that I looked so shocked, he became embarrassed.

And it was then that I realized that Ancient Egyptians would have had a completely different language.

But then I narrowed my eyes, "how are you speaking English then?" Ancient Egyptians couldn't speak English, obviously.

He shrugged, "It's part of the curse, I suppose. I was told that I was meant to live like the people I rule... a peasant. They cannot read and write, but they can speak."

Like almost everything that had to do with this guy, I had a ton of difficulty trying to wrap my head around this. But I just sighed, "well... after exams are over, I'll teach you how to read. English is actually really easy."

He didn't say anything to that. He just got up and walked off.

Neferkiti followed closely behind him as he went into his room, which made me fume in jealousy.

But I sighed and then went back to studying.

Having prom after exams is overall an excellent thing. I mean, you could have the time of your life without any worries about exams, which would be coming soon after.

However, for people like me who sucked at prioritizing and rocked at procrastination... prom dress shopping was left last minute.

Which meant it would be rushed.

So, the day my exams finished, Aurora and I went rushing to find the perfect prom dress... we were rushing because prom was two days away.

Aurora had no problem finding hers, since she had the face and the body to rock almost any kind of dress.

Her dress ended up being the lovely green that matched her eyes. It was long but had a slit in the skirt that reached to the middle of her left thigh.

You see, that kind of thing was too scandalous for me.

I never wore short shorts so my thighs have literally never seen the light of day. And I planned to keep it that way, to be honest.

Even my swimsuits consisted of a skirt that fell to just above my knees.

Yeah, I was pretty modest when it came to dressing.

So as you can imagine, it took me a long time to find a dress... when finally, Ro pulled out one that I feel madly in love with.

It was a lovely light pink, almost white dress with an empire waistline and sweetheart neck. The sleeves were spaghetti straps and the entire breast part and above were covered in silver beads.

It was perfect.

When I tried it, it was even more perfect.

And thus, the two of us had found our prom dresses two days before prom.

For the next two days, Aurora and I prepared ourselves for the special day.

Obviously, that meant I was busy, which meant I couldn't go see Akhenatem often.

But I had bought him a prepaid SIM card, which I put into a very old iPhone of mine. I taught him how to open it, how to tap on text, how to tap on my picture so that he could text me. This entire thing forced me to sit down with him for an hour and explain to him how a phone worked, which surprisingly made me realize that I didn't really know much about how phones worked either.

I mean... how *do* our voices travel from one phone to another?

But whatever. I told him it was science and that it was wrong to question science.

My science teacher would have murdered me if she heard that though. She lived by the philosophy that science was there to be questioned.

Anyways, I had also preset three autocorrects into it and made him memorize them since he still didn't know how to read or write in English.

The first one was if he were to text 'H', it would autocorrect itself to HELP.

If he were to text 'C' it would autocorrect itself to COME

And if her were to text 'N' it would autocorrect to NEFERKITI.

Yeah, I tried to make it as simple as possible.

Unfortunately for me, I realized that that was a very bad idea. Since I within a day or two I was constantly receiving HELP. COME. HELP. COME. HELP. COME. COME. COME.

One time it was COMEEGSF.

I have no idea how he managed that.

Thankfully, I also taught him how to pick up the phone when I called. So I was able to give him a call and ask him what was wrong with him.

It was ninety-five percent of the time because he was hungry and didn't like the food I prepared for him.

The other five percent of the time was because he was bored and demanded that I get him something to do.

But anyways, when I realized he was being annoying, I tried to take the phone back.

Obviously, he refused to give it back to me.

So in the two days that I spent with Aurora, I kept receiving text, after text, after text from the Pharaoh.

Eventually, I got so annoyed that I stepped out of the shoe store that Ro and I were in and called him.

He picked up immediately and spoke right away, "Princess," he said the word as if it were an insult, though the title caught me off guard, "I expect a quick response to my calls—"

"Akhenatem, I am *busy*." I started, "this better be important—"

"I told you that I do *not* like soggy carrots but you filled the rice with soggy carrots—"

"Akhenatem, unless you are dying or Neferkiti is in trouble, do *not* text me."

"Listen, *girl*—"

I hung up and rolled my eyes before returning to the shop to buy some heels.

The texting stopped after that. So now I had time to focus on other things.

Like the fact that I didn't have a date to prom. Yeah, no one 'promposed' to me. But that was okay. I wasn't expecting to have a date to prom. Though part of me wished that I had the guts to ask Blake out to prom.

Of course, I had no such guts.

But what sucked was that Aurora had decided that since I didn't have a date to

prom, she wouldn't have a date to prom and therefore, Alec wasn't coming.

I tried to convince her that it was okay and that I would love it if Alec was there. Especially since she had already paid ninety dollars for his ticket.

Eventually, Alec, who was with us at the time, suggested that he would be both of our dates.

I laughed, finding that ridiculous. But Ro thought that was a brilliant idea.

And now Alec had to find a tie that was both light pink and green.

On prom night, I did my own makeup... only because I liked the way I did my makeup and found that I was never happy when anyone else did it. But Alec's sister did our hair. She was a hair stylist who had her own salon and because we knew Alec, she gave us a great discount.

But once I was ready, I felt amazing.

You see it in the movies all the time... where girls hyped up prom and were always so excited for it. I never understood why... at least not until I was looking at myself in the mirror.

I really *felt* like a princess.

My hair was curled and looked so lovely in a fancy half ponytail and the dress just looked so great.

And strangely, I found myself thinking that if Akhenatem saw me like this, he actually would think I was a princess.

The thought made me smile.

We took lots of pictures that night and after pictures we ate. And after that, we danced and danced and danced.

I still stand by the fact that I couldn't dance even if my life depended on it... but with Ro, I had the time of my life.

However, right before the night came to an end, a couple slow dances played.

I sat at our table and watched as Alec and Ro danced.

Gosh, were they so cute.

And then I sighed, only now kind of wishing that I had a date.

I imagined what it would be like to dance with Blake like that. Barefoot, it would have been weird, since he was so tall. However, with these heels on, it wouldn't be so bad.

My heart skipped a beat at the thought and my cheeks started to heat up.

"Hey."

I jumped at the sudden voice and turned my head. Dom was sitting next to me but I wasn't surprised to see him. I had seen him a couple times, hanging out with his friends, but we didn't talk at all this night until just now.

"Hey Dom." I smiled and fiddled with my cellphone.

My old crush for Dom had completely vanished at this point. I mean, after the whole Viktor thing, I thought it would be stupid of me to feel any sort of romantic liking for him.

I had to admit though, the fact that I saw Blake *a lot* more these days helped me abandon the crush for Dom. Blake still came by often to check on Akhenatem.

Akhenatem kind of liked Blake... it might have been because Blake was so friendly and patient.

But then again, I was friendly too and Akhenatem didn't like me.

And just as I tried to figure out why Akhenatem liked Blake and not me, my phone vibrated.

It was Akhenatem texting.

Speak of the devil and he shall appear?

Or he shall text... I guess would be more appropriate in this situation.

I held back an eye roll as I opened up the text, but Dom suddenly spoke. "Are you listening to me?"

"What?" I asked as I looked at him, realizing only now that he was talking to me.

"Dance with me!" He was grinning.

I stared at him, "what?"

He stood up, "let dance!"

I stared at him in disbelief. But as I did, my phone vibrated again.

I guess I could dance with him. It wouldn't hurt. "Okay..."

And then my phone vibrated again.

It was almost midnight. What did he need now?

"Hold on..." I said as I stood up.

I looked down at my phone, opened up the text and saw three words that made my heart start to panic almost instantly.

HELP.

NEFERKITI. HELP.

COME.

This was the first time he ever texted me about Neferkiti, so my panic skyrocketed.

"One sec," I said to Dom, who looked confused.

I called Akhenatem, praying that Neferkiti was okay.

But he didn't pick up.

He didn't pick up when I called a second time either.

Or the third.

I looked at Dom, "I'm sorry, I have to go."

"What?" He asked,

I grabbed my purse, turned around and rushed off.

"May! What the hell!" I heard him call over me, "are you fucking Cinderella or something?"

I ignored the comment as I ran out of the banquet hall and onto the street. The hall was in the middle of downtown, so I ended up having to flag down a taxi and beg the driver to get me home as fast as he could.

I texted Aurora, telling her that I had to leave early and not to worry about me.

And then I kept calling Akhenatem.

He didn't pick up.

I panicked, not knowing what to do. Was Neferkiti hurt?

My wildest fears started to fill my brain.

What if Akhenatem opened the balcony door and she jumped out?

What if she just vanished?

What if she ate something she wasn't supposed to eat?

What if she did something to annoy Akhenatem and in a fit of rage... he killed her? He was supposed to be cruel after all? Was this it? Was I finally going to see that cruel side to him?

I kept calling him, over and over again.

Why the hell won't he pick up! I screamed in my head.

When the taxi finally arrived at my brother's apartment, I paid him with the extra cash I brought with me and rushed in through the doors.

The elevator ride seemed longer than ever, but I pulled my keys out and got myself ready to bolt out the door the second they opened.

Which was exactly what I did.

When I reached my brother's door, I unlocked it and stormed in, "What's wrong?!" I shouted as I ran in.

Akhenatem, who was sitting on the chair in front of the kitchen's island, turned and looked at me in shock. Sitting in front of him on the counter was Neferkiti, who was busy chewing on the pepperoni that Akhenatem had just fed to her.

I stared at him, taking deep, heavy breaths.

And he stared back.

I sighed loudly and closed my eyes, "why did you text me?"

When I opened them again I saw him standing, facing me. There was some confusion on his face. "The food you said was for Neferkiti finished. She was hungry."

I slowly brought my hands to my face and held back my urge to scream.

I just stood there for a moment, and when I calmed down, I dropped my shoulders, kicked off my heels and walked over to the couch.

I slumped down onto it and sighed again.

God, was it a bad idea to give him a phone.

He fed Neferkiti a couple more pieces of pepperoni, which he peeled off of the pizza's I had left him and then walked over to the empty couch, the kitten in his arms.

When he sat, Neferkiti jumped from him and came to me, purring as she waited for me to pet her.

And I did.

It was almost as if she was begging for forgiveness on Akhenatem's behalf.

"Why are you dressed like that?" Akhenatem asked, crossing his arms and leaning back against the couch.

"Is there a problem with this?" I asked, sounding as annoyed as I actually was.

"No," he said, "I'm just curious."

I let out a breath. "Prom."

"What's that?"

"A party."

"What kind of party?"

"A party to celebrate finishing high school." I lifted Neferkiti into my arms and she rubbed her head against my chest.

She was telling me to be patient with him. Clearly.

"What do you do at the party?"

"You dance and stuff."

He finally just nodded, not having any more questions to ask.

And after a moment, I sighed once more and stood up. Neferkiti jumped from my hands and started to run around me. "I'm going home," I said, "I'll bring Neferkiti some food tomorrow morning."

He stood up too and surprised me by walking to the door.

After putting on my heels and turning around, I found myself to be only half a foot shorter than the Pharaoh now. I don't know why I noticed that.

I just did.

"See you," I said, opening the door.

"It suits you," I suddenly heard him say.

I turned around and looked at him, "what?"

"This look suits you," he said. His face remained cold and hard, though his voice was strangely... nice.

I blinked.

"It makes you look more like a princess."

I blinked again, but this time my cheeks heated up a little. "Thanks, I guess."

He nodded and then with that, I left.

I had to admit though, the comment did make me forgive him for forcing me to run out of my high school prom before it even ended.

The next day, instead of putting on my usual jeans and t-shirt, I found myself putting on that blue polka dot dress that my brother sent me for my birthday. I still didn't wear it yet so I thought it was about time. On top of it, I wore a white cardigan and left my hair out.

Though my brother didn't know it, I've been using his car more than I had anticipated. I kind of had no choice since I was going to his apartment pretty often and his apartment was quite a far drive from my house. And besides, I was paying for the gas so I wasn't doing any harm.

But it was a hot day, so I drove in my brother's expensive car with the window down and sunglasses on.

To be honest...

Now that high school was officially over... I finally felt like an adult. I mean, I still didn't technically graduate yet. The graduation ceremony was in July. But still, I felt like an adult. And that, for whatever reason, boosted my confidence levels like no tomorrow.

After parking his car and taking the elevator up to his floor, I strutted to my brother's door in my somewhat high heels (not really, they were only like, two inches) with my hair swaying from side to side.

I should also mention that I was carrying a massive bag of cat food, which may or may not have ruined the walk. But whatever.

And before I opened the door, I pushed my sunglasses up onto my head.

When I walked in, I was greeted immediately by Neferkiti.

She had grown very quickly and though she was still very small, she was definitely bigger than when I first met her. But she was as sweet as ever. She rubbed herself against my leg as I put aside the cat food and bent down. "Hey, my Queen of Egypt." I whispered as I lifted her up into my arms.

I was *finally* able to enjoy myself freely with her, knowing that I had no exam to write the next day. I could finally spoil her and make me her favourite... rather than the current Akhenatem.

Speaking of Akhenatem, I thought that he was sleeping, but when I walked further into the apartment I saw that he was standing in the kitchen, eating a granola bar, which he had cut in half, wrapper and all. Probably because he couldn't maneuver the packaging.

I rolled my eyes and walked over to him, "that's not how you open them," I picked one up and showed him step by step how to open it.

Though he watched, when I was finished he shrugged. "Why does it matter? In the end I'm eating it all the same."

I hesitated. I had no argument to that aside from, "manners."

Of course, he didn't give two-craps about manners.

"Did you sleep well?" I asked as I walked towards the living room, Neferkiti still in my arms.

I was considering cleaning the place up... but he surprisingly kept the entire place very neat.

There was nothing really to clean up.

"I did not," he said, "I heard this strange wailing noise from outside the window.

I spent the entire night trying to figure out what kind of annoying animal that was."

"Wailing?"

He nodded, still in the kitchen, "it was consistent and repetitive and high-pitched," he said, "there were blue and red lights flashing as well."

I laughed, "that's no animal! That was a police car!"

"A what?"

"The guards," I said, trying to help him understand, "When there are people in their way and they're in a rush they turn on their sirens which play that sound."

"And wake up everyone in the vicinity."

I smiled, "yeah." I wondered if it was Blake. "Hey, did Blake come by recently?"

The Pharaoh nodded as he walked towards me, "he came once during the two days that you were busy with your childish party preparations."

I nodded.

"You seem dressed up today," he suddenly said, stepping closer, "do you have another party to go to?"

I was a little glad he thought I was dressed up, "no," I said, "Since school is over, I'm starting my part time job again. When I get home though, I'm finally gonna start teaching you how to read."

"What is this part time job?" He sat on the other couch, "does it involve the sweets decorations?"

I nodded.

My part time job was making cakes at Grandma Seetha's bakery. Grandma Seetha was Aunty Maya's mother. She owned a bakery and she, along with Aunty Maya, were the ones who got me into baking. Grandma Seetha was also the one who taught me everything I knew about cooking.

"How long will it take?" He asked.

I looked down at my watch, "well, I start at ten and end at five."

I had taught him how to read a clock already, so I saw him turn around and stare at the clock for a moment before he turned around and looked at me, "and what exactly am I supposed to do in all that time?"

I then realized something, "wait..." I stood up, "you should come too!"

He hesitated, "what?"

"Grandma Seetha would be thrilled to have a boy who could do some heavy lifting and cleaning for her."

"Labor jobs? Are you insane?"

"C'mon," I said, motioning him to get up, "you've been living here for free so might as well make some money while you're here."

"I refuse to—"

"Grandma Seetha is the mother of the woman who came in my dreams and told me to help you. That woman is dead so you could owe your thanks to Grandma Seetha instead."

"I have gained nothing good from your help." He said, immediately.

I gave him a quick glare before making my way into his room. And to my surprise, he got up and followed without arguing.

Despite his words, maybe he *did* want to owe his thanks.

I picked out a nice pair of Blake's old jeans, a new white men's tank top and a red button up shirt.

"Did you take a bath already?" I asked him as I placed the clothes on the bed.

"I take a bath as soon as I wake up."

"Good," I pointed at the tank top, "put this on first and then put the red shirt on

after. You don't need to button it up, okay?"

He nodded and started to remove his shirt right in front of me.

I felt my cheeks heat up as I groaned and left the room as fast as I could.

While I waited for him to get ready, I fed Neferkiti and decided I would take her too. I didn't want her to be left here alone for so long and I was sure Grandma Seetha wouldn't mind Neferkiti being there so long as she stayed off the counters and a good distance away from the food.

When Akhenatem walked into the kitchen after getting ready, I surprised myself by doing a double take.

Damn. He looked pretty good.

I should be a stylist.

But his hair was a mess and I didn't like it.

"Hold on," I said as I walked over to my brother's washroom. I rummaged through the cupboards and found a hair gel. After checking the expiration date and deeming it safe, I rubbed it into my fingers and commanded him to bend down.

He narrowed his eyes at me, "what are you doing?"

"Relax, it's just hair gel. It'll keep your hair in place,"

"Why?"

"To look neat?"

"There's so many decorations with you people. Why don't you just let me shave my head bald like I'm supposed to as the Pharaoh?"

"Because you look better with hair," I said. He did. He looked a lot better with his hair grown out.

His eye remained narrowed but he did bend down slightly.

I tried to make it quick, only realizing how awkward this was when my fingers touched his surprisingly soft hair.

But I gelled some his front hair up and styled it to the best of my capability.

When he straightened up, I was totally pleased.

And thankfully, he also looked pleased when he looked into the mirror.

"Alright, let's head out," I said as I rushed into my brother's room, grabbed the cat carrier that Aurora bought me so that I could take Neferkiti to a vet to get registered.

It was a big cat carrier and so Neferkiti still fit perfectly into it. After zipping it closed, I smiled at her through the mesh after she meowed, "it's only for a little while, my kitty."

I then straightened up and walked into the living room, picked up my cross-body bag and threw it over me.

When I walked back, Akhenatem already had his shoes on and was holding Neferkiti's carrier. He was peeking into it and shaking his head, "how dare you restrain her so."

I rolled my eyes, "we have too. It's dangerous outside and if she were to jump out of our arms or something, she could get really hurt."

He didn't argue with that, but he still seemed to not like the idea of the sacred kitten being in such a small space.

When we were in the elevator, I realized something. "My grandma might have some difficulty saying your name," I said, remembering that she always had difficulties saying the names of Egyptian Pharaohs whenever Aunty Maya talked about them. "Do you have a short form?"

"You've already shortened my name enough," he said, staring at the digital numbers on the elevator that singled each floor we passed on our way down.

"Alright well, I guess we have two options," I continued, "Akhen or Atem."

"It's not 'a-tem,' it's 'AH-tem'" he corrected as he emphasized the 'Ah' sound.

"Atem it is." I didn't emphasize the 'A' sound, partially to annoy him.

It worked.

"My grandmother will ask you what your name is... and you can't say anything stupid like 'it's Pharaoh to you, mortal,'" he snorted but didn't smile, "you gotta say, hello, my name is Akhenatem, but you can call me Atem."

"I don't want to be called Atem."

"Just do what I say." I responded as the elevator doors opened.

As we left the building, I dropped my sunglasses over my eyes and heard Neferkiti meow. It was obvious that she really liked the outdoors.

In response to the meow, Akhenatem, or Atem as I would call him now, lifted her carrier up and looked into the mesh. "This must be torture for the cat. She should be free,"

"Says the cruelest Pharaoh in ancient Egypt. I'm sure you threw plenty of human beings into prison while you were king."

He didn't respond to that. Instead, he lowered the carrier and kept walking, looking straight ahead.

We were silent for a couple minutes and I wondered if I insulted him, but then he spoke up again.

"Why didn't we take your horseless carriage?"

"I told you already, it's a *car*, not a carriage. And we don't need to. Grandma Seetha's cake shop is just five minutes away."

He turned to look at me and opened his mouth to say something but stopped.

He narrowed his eyes and I looked at him through my sunglasses in confusion.

"What the hell is on your face?"

"What?" I wiped my face, "what's on it?"

"The thing on your eyes?"

I hesitated. *My sunglasses?* "These?" I pulled my sunglasses off.

"Yes, those. How can you see anything?"

I chuckled, "here, try them on if you want."

"I'd rather not."

"They're to protect your eyes from the sun."

"*What?*" He looked genuinely shocked, "the people of your time must be unbelievably weak to have the need to protect themselves from the *sun!*"

I remembered at that moment that he was from Egypt. A desert. Where the sun would beam down on them at full strength.

"Protection from the sun," he let out a sarcastic laugh, "pathetic."

I rolled my eyes and put my sunglasses on my head because we had made it.

My grandmother's cake shop sat at the bottom floor of her actual home. So the entrance from the street side led right into the cake shop, and from there if you were to go up you would be in her living room and above that was her top floor. I imagined that if I ever had my own cake shop, I would want it to be the same way.

So when I opened the door, the bell jingled and my grandmother, who was putting a few cupcakes out for display, looked up.

Her face brightened, "May, darling! My little princess." She beamed as she walked around the counter and gave me a hug.

I hugged her back, "Hey Grandma Seetha." I hadn't seen her in a while because of all that had been going on, and though I did talk to her on the phone frequently, it was still not the same as actually seeing her in person.

Grandma Seetha was kind of short but thin like Aunty Maya was. Her hair was

fully silver and she grew it out really long but braided it back all the time. She had the exact same eyes as Auntie Maya did, a light shade of brown, and they smiled all the time. And one thing about Grandma Seetha was that she *always* wore dresses. I've never seen her in pants, *ever*.

She was beautiful and very friendly and something about her always made me feel calm.

She pulled away and looked at me, "you look beautiful, sweetheart," she chuckled, "look at you, my little high school graduate."

I grinned at her.

She kissed my cheek and then pulled away. When she did, she smiled warmly at Atem, who was watching rather awkwardly. "And who is this handsome young man?"

"This is my friend," I said as I looked at Akhenatem.

He looked back at me.

"It's nice to meet you, I'm Seetha." Grandma Seetha said, making the Pharaoh look at her, "what's your name, sweetheart?"

He hesitated, but then let out a breath, "I am Akhenatem. But you can... call me *Ah*-tem." He emphasized the "ah."

Grandma Seetha hesitated, "Aka... Akhan..." Like I thought, she couldn't get a hang of the name. But she turned to me, "that's the name of the Egyptian Pharaoh who Maya was studying, isn't it?"

I hesitated, shocked that she remembered. Though I shouldn't have been. Grandma Seetha was Auntie Maya's mother. "Yeah... coincidence, huh? That's what got the two of us talking, actually."

Grandma Seetha chuckled, "quite the coincidence indeed!" She turned back to Atem, "do you live near here?"

"I am staying at her—"

"Rent!" I said quickly, not thinking this far ahead into the conversation, "he's renting out my brother's place."

"How nice," Grandma Seetha kept smiling, "it's a lovely apartment."

I smiled, glad that the questions were done. "Well... Atem kind of needs a job..." I said, trying to change the subject and annoying Akhenatem again by not emphasizing the 'A' sound in his name. "I was hoping that you'd be okay with letting him work part time over here?"

Grandma Seetha nodded quickly, "Oh my, yes!" She said, "I would *love* the extra help!"

I smiled, pleased.

"There's so much work that I've been pushing aside... my back isn't as good as it used to be, you know."

I laughed.

"But yes, I would love the extra help," she turned to Atem, "thank you so much, young man."

He simply nodded.

After giving me the instructions of a cake she had to have done for this evening, I took over and threw on an apron. I told Grandma Seetha to go rest and that I could handle it. And though she argued at first, she thanked me and headed upstairs.

When she was gone, Atem put Neferkiti's carrier on one of the five small tables that Grandma Seetha had inside the shop for people to sit and eat at. "Shall I release her now?"

I was rather humored by his choice of words, but I nodded. "Yeah, go ahead, but not on the table."

He moved the carrier onto the floor and then made me gasp when he ripped the mesh open with his fingers instead of unzipping the zipper. "Atem!" I squeaked.

He looked at me in shock, "what?"

"You ripped it!"

"You said I could release her!"

"Yeah! Through the zippered door! Not by ripping the goddamn mesh!"

"Why does it matter?" He was carrying Neferkiti now, "either way I'm taking her out!"

"But now I can't use the carrier!"

"Get a new one."

"Do you know how much money they are?"

"Oh Ra, you are such a petulant girl! Give me better instructions next time!"

I scoffed and then started to scratch my head vigorously.

Eventually, however, I got over it and started the cake.

Atem did mostly cleaning related stuff, though he tried his best to get out of it. And once I gave up on trying to be mad at him for ripping the carrier I let him work with the cupcake batter. Grandma Seetha also had an order of one hundred cupcakes for a birthday party and I didn't think it would be too difficult for him to take the batter and put it into the cupcake trays.

The thing about Atem, which was a relief, was that he was a quick learner. Thank goodness for that. So he worked rather efficiently while I iced the fiftieth anniversary cake.

Neferkiti stood on the other side of the counter and watched us for a little while, but then she made her way to a corner, where the now torn cat carrier sat, and fell asleep.

Halfway into the day, I had finished the cake, which was now sitting in the fridge. Akhenatem was minding his own business, sweeping.

I watched him with a small smile, trying not to laugh at the sight of a supposedly

cruel Egyptian pharaoh sweeping the floor of a cake shop.

It was quite the sight.

And right then, the bell of the door jingled.

When I looked over, I saw Aurora grinning as she walked towards me.

My eyes widened.

I still hadn't mentioned anything to her about Akhenatem and I guess today was going to be the day that I finally did.

She dropped a bag of McDonalds on the counter, "aren't I the best?"

"You are the best." I smiled.

She chuckled, "Anything for you, my princess." She bowed dramatically, "but why didn't you pick up when I called."

"Oh... I'm sorry, my phone's upstairs."

She nodded, "I was in the area so I thought I'd drop by and buy myself a cupcake."

"It's free for you, bestie."

Aurora gave me a funny smile, "don't be silly. I'll pay."

After she picked out a cupcake, I began to put it into the cash register, but then I saw her gaze find Atem.

"Oh, wow." She whispered, leaning forward, "who's the hottie?"

I let out a sarcastic laugh, still looking down at the cash register.

"Look at him, he looks like such a sweetheart."

I looked up, he was petting Neferkiti before returning to sweeping.

"Sweetheart?" I scoffed, "ha! He's a total jerk, trust me."

Ro looked at me, "really? But he's cute though—"

"Hey, princess." Atem called, sarcasm filling his voice.

My shoulders rose as my head shot up to look at Aurora. Aurora gave me a funny look, eyebrows raised as she turned to Atem.

"What do I do with the filth?"

I let out a breath and looked at him, "use the scoopy thing."

"The what?"

I pointed at the scoopy thing.

When he spotted it, he turned to me and gave me a look of disbelief.

I shrugged.

"Unbelievable," he muttered.

Aurora let out a laugh as she looked at me.

"He's a totally spoiled rich boy," I said, "he got kicked out and now he's gotta fend for himself."

Yeah, I read a lot. It kind of made me a good liar.

Before Aurora could say what she wanted to say, Atem held the scoopy thing out at me.

"What now?" He asked.

"Ugh! Atem!" I groaned as I walked around the counter. I took the scoopy thing and dumped its contents into the trash. "You dump it in the trash! Not stuff it in my face."

Akhenatem let out an annoyed breath, "am I *done*?"

"No," I said, but then I looked at Aurora, "Aurora, meet Atem. Atem meet my best friend Aurora."

Aurora smiled and nodded her head.

"It's Ah-tem," he corrected, "Akhen-ah-tem, to be exact."

Her head tilted slightly, "that sounds... Egyptian."

"It is."

"Go to the back, Atem. I've got to ice a hundred cupcakes so you can help."

He gave me an annoyed sigh, but did as I said.

When he vanished behind the door, I looked at Ro, who was shaking her head.

"I change my mind. You can't date him."

I snorted, "what?" *Date?* Where did that come from?

"He's a douche-bag. Spoiled boys are the worst."

"Told you so."

"Anyways, I won't keep you too long. Call me when you're free, okay?" She leaned forward and kissed my cheek before we said our goodbyes.

My Social Media!



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Chapter 7 - [Beauty and the Kindergarten Workbooks]

After a day filled with an equal amount of annoyance *and* humor, it was finally over.

Strangely enough, it ended off with Grandma Seetha telling me how sweet she thought Akhenatem was. Apparently it's not every day a boy comes to work in a cake shop.

At around five thirty, both Atem and I were on our way back to my brother's apartment.

As I promised, I was going to teach Atem how to read and write so on our way home, I stopped by a bookstore and bought a bunch of kindergarten English workbooks and a new set of pencils and erasers and some pencil crayons. I even got him a pencil case.

I had tutored kindergartners as a part time job before, so I knew this wasn't going to be too hard. Especially since Atem seemed to be a fast learner.

He didn't seem to argue when I placed the books on the kitchen's island and told him to sit at the chairs in front of it. It made me realize that maybe he really did want to learn to read and write.

But that wasn't too surprising. It must have been such a drag to no be able to read or write.

Especially read.

Not being able to read would totally suck.

So for the rest of the evening, we sat at the counter and he traced the alphabets over and over and over again while I reminded him what sound each letter made.

He commented frequently on how easy the English language was in comparison to his own language. And I didn't argue with that. I didn't know Egyptian. I remember buying a book to try and learn hieroglyph's once to impress my Aunty Maya... but gave up after the first page. It was too complicated.

By the end of the evening, he had memorized the entire alphabet though he refused to sing it, and that was pretty good in my opinion for only one day of learning.

What I personally learned about him was that not only was he left handed, but he *really* seemed to enjoy coloring activities.

Which made me wonder if I should get him a coloring book for him to use during all the free time he has.

And that was when I realized how much it felt like I was actually raising a kid.

The next day was spent learning to write as well since I didn't work on Sundays.

But when I got to the apartment on Monday morning, Blake opening the door surprised me.

"Hey!" I said, "what are you doing here?"

Blake smiled his usual warm smile as he stepped aside to let me in. "Akhenatem said that you'd probably be here soon."

"Where is he, anyways?" And just as I spoke, Neferkiti came rushing out of Akhenatem's room and Akhenatem followed. He was holding one of the workbooks in his hands and when he reached me, he handed it to me, "I have completed this lesson. Am I proficient in this language yet?"

I chuckled, "No, you need to do more practice. Then we've got to start putting it all together."

He didn't look too annoyed by that, to my surprise, instead he walked into the kitchen, "I need food."

I rolled my eyes and looked at Blake, who was still smiling at me. "You're teaching him how to read and write?" He asked. He knew that Atem couldn't

read and write, which made him worry more over the fact that I was keeping him here rather than taking him to the hospital or something to get some help.

I nodded, walking over to the kitchen to start up some breakfast. I hadn't eaten yet either.

"That's very kind of you, May."

"Thanks," I grinned, glad that *someone* appreciated my efforts.

"I don't think I'd ever have the patience," he said.

"Trust me," I gave him a funny smile, "if I can do it, you can totally do it."

He laughed, "well, I actually dropped by cause I've been thinking that it's pretty unhealthy for him to be cooped up in here all day."

"I was thinking that too," I started, "so I started making him go to work with me on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays." Those were the only days I worked, which meant he would come with me.

"At the cake shop?" Blake asked in disbelief.

"Yeah," I chuckled, "I know, weird, but at least he's leaving the house."

"Yeah, that's true. But... I also noticed that he's kind of gained some weight—"

He was acting like he was ignoring us this entire time, but when he heard Blake's comment he looked over at us with his eyes slightly widened.

"and you know, when we first met him, he might have been a little crazy and all but he looked like a physically healthy guy."

"I *am* physically healthy," Atem said.

I looked over at him. I personally hadn't noticed any weight gain... but maybe it's because I've been seeing him so frequently.

"I just thought I'd take him to the gym with me."

I looked at Blake, "really?"

He nodded, "I usually go right before work on Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday. I got the day off today, which is why I'm late but usually I'll go early, so it shouldn't interfere with him coming to work with you."

"That'd be awesome!" I said. Not only would that mean that he's out of my hair for a little while... but it would be good for him. I heard exercise helps calm the mind or something like that.

"Alright," Blake looked pleased, "we could leave right after he eats breakfast."

"Leave where?" Atem asked, "you can't take me anywhere without telling me where it is first."

"Leave to the gym," I said.

"The what?"

"The gym. To exercise."

"Exercise?" He was looking at Blake now and Blake nodded. "You wanna go?" Blake asked.

"What kind of exercise? Sword fights—"

"No," Blake started to laugh, "like weightlifting and running and stuff."

I expected the Pharaoh to make a sarcastic comment Something along the lines of "Pshhh, you mortals exercise by *lifting weights*? HUH! We lifted horses for fun where I come from!"

But he didn't say that. Instead, he nodded his head thoughtfully. "Fine. I'll join you."

After eating breakfast and helping to pick a gym outfit for the Pharaoh, he was off with Blake to the gym.

Then Neferkiti and I were alone.

I tried to call Aurora to see if she was free to hang. But she didn't pick up so I assumed that she was still sleeping.

And surprisingly, I had nothing to do.

So after sitting on the couch and petting Neferkiti for a bit, I found myself flipping through the workbook that Akhenatem had been working on. Most of it involved tracing letters, but there were sections where he had to colour the pictures that started with a certain letter.

Since I had taught him the sounds of the letters, he got most of them right.

But then there were certain words he clearly didn't know.

Like Kangaroo.

I snorted when I saw that he scribbled over the kangaroo in black and put a big question mark next to it. I had taught him to put a question mark next to anything he didn't understand so I could explain it to him later.

He also thought cake started with 'K'. But that was fine. Everyone made that mistake at least once in his or her life, right?

And after having a good chuckle here and there over the things in that workbook, I picked up a book and read for the two or so hours that the two boys were gone.

When they returned, Akhenatem looked especially pleased. Clearly he had enjoyed himself.

Blake had to leave right after that though. Apparently he promised to go visit his mom.

So Akhenatem was stuck with me again.

I took him out for lunch, since I was too lazy to cook that day. After eating, I was walking home in front of him, texting Ro and not waiting up for him while he looked around in awe and confusion.

Every time we left the house, there was always something new that he would ask me questions about.

Today it was the bicycle.

I wanted to buy a brand new bicycle for university. My brother's apartment was really close to Oakville University, but it was still quite the walk. On top of that, the campus was *huge*, so getting around campus would take a lot of walking, so I decided to get a bike to help me get around.

So on our way home, I stopped by a bike store to check out the prices so that I knew how much I'd have to save up.

And the bicycle questions from Atem never ended until I walked ahead and started texting Ro.

But eventually, they started up again.

"Hey, Princess."

The title startled me from my walk and made me look at him.

It always took me by surprise when he called me that. It wasn't often... but his timing was always *perfect*.

Yeah, sarcasm intended.

This time around, people walking past us turned and some even made the "aww" sound, commenting on how sweet Atem must have been for calling me a Princess. They must have thought we were dating or something.

If only they knew that he may have been the cruelest Pharaoh that ever existed.

"Is that how your bicycle works?" He pointed off in the distance at a woman who was riding her bike across the street.

I nodded, "yeah."

Atem nodded, watching the bike until he couldn't see it anymore, "it's like a chariot, almost..."

I imagined a bike to be *nothing* like a chariot but I chose not to argue. Instead, I decided to set this princess thing straight. "Atem, you can stop calling me Princess."

He looked at me, "then what do I call you?"

It was at that moment that I realized that he's never called me by my name once. In fact, I don't even remember telling him my name at all. I'm sure he knew it though, after hearing people say it so many times.

"May." I said, "just call me May. And, you do realize that I'm not a princess, right?"

He looked taken aback. "What?"

"Yeah, that wasn't true."

"You *lied* to me?" His words came out as a loud hiss.

I shushed him and pushed him into walking, "gosh! Do you have to be so loud?"

"You aren't a princess?"

"No." I said.

"Then why did you tell me you were a princess?!"

"To shut you up!"

He obviously looked offended, "you lying bitch!"

At this point I just groaned and started walking ahead again. God was he a jerk.

Of course he followed me home, despite thinking I was a liar.

But it seemed as if he decided that he wasn't going to talk to me anymore.

He went straight to his room while I returned to the couch to continue reading.

Neferkiti, fortunately, picked my side and stayed with me.

And half an hour passed.

After that, he walked out of his room, head held high. "Fine, I will forgive you since you have been teaching me how to read and write."

I snorted, "I didn't ask for your forgiveness."

He ignored it and sat on the other couch. At first, I felt his silent stare while he remained silent. But eventually spoke up, "what are you doing?"

"Reading."

"Yes, I know that, fool. I meant *what* are you reading?"

"A story."

He leaned back into the couch, "about?"

"It's a romance. I'm sure you're not interested."

He hesitated, "yes. That's right."

A smile broke out on my face. "You are such a loser."

"What?"

I looked back at my book, smile still on my face, "nothing."

He only let me go back to my reading after I handed him a new kindergarten English book.

But before he got working on that, I had to flip through the old one and tell him to fix his mistakes.

When we got to the kangaroo that was scribbled over, I found myself laughing again. "Why did you scribble over it?"

He was sitting right next to me now, "because it's hideous."

"Hideous?" I thought kangaroos were rather majestic.

"Of course. Does that look anything like a deer to you? It looks more like a deer and a rabbit mixed together."

I burst out laughing. "You think that's a deer?"

Atem looked at me, confused, "yes."

"That's not a deer!"

"Then what the hell is it?"

"It's a kangaroo!"

"What?"

I pulled out my cellphone and used Google to search up pictures of kangaroos. I guess ancient Egyptians have never seen kangaroos before. But that made sense. Kangaroos were in Australia.

When I showed him the picture, he stared at it in shock. He took my phone from me and examined it as well as he possibly could. "It's a mix of a deer and a rabbit."

I took the phone back from him and looked at it too... I guess it did kind of look like a mix of a deer and a rabbit.

But of course, I wasn't going to let him think that the kangaroo was a poorly drawn deer. So I made him repeat the word kangaroo three times before we moved on.

Within the next couple of weeks, Akhenatem continued to improve in his reading skills. He could now easily identify a kangaroo and even a beaver. He also knew now what a school bus was, and an airplane, and a truck. Overall, he was a smart cookie.

Blake continued to take him to the gym on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and he continued to come with me to work.

Obviously, this meant that I saw him pretty much on a daily basis. Weekends were reserved for Aurora, so sometimes I went without seeing him, or Neferkiti, on weekends. But aside from weekends, I saw him *all the time*.

And strangely...

That didn't bother me too much.

I had officially graduated, which was *awesome*. So I officially felt like an adult. An educated adult. I was a month away from starting postsecondary school and boy was I excited. And maybe it was this new change in my life that made me become more tolerant of Akhenatem.

I was a responsible adult now. That meant I had to be patient and tolerant, right? Just like Aunt Maya would tell me to be.

Of course, Atem's attitude didn't change much. He still thought he was the king of the world and he still acted like a smartass here and there. But I have to admit, our relationship got a *tiny* bit better.

Just a *tiny* bit.

But that was better than nothing, right?

I woke up on the first day of July to my phone ringing over and over and over again. At first, I thought it was Akhenatem, but when I looked at the screen, it showed a picture of my big brother.

"Hello?" I answered, my voice sounding as sleepy as I actually was.

"May," my brother's deep voice responded, "is there seriously some weird stranger staying at my place?"

Oh crap. He found out. "What?" I responded, stupidly.

"Is there someone I don't know who's staying at my apartment."

I tried to think of a proper response as quickly as my sleepy brain would allow me to. So, the only people who knew about him staying there were Blake, my uncle and my brother's old lady neighbor. Obviously the old lady neighbor didn't tell him.

So it was either Blake or my uncle. Both of whose words my brother would take over mine.

So I couldn't bullshit my way out of it.

Therefore, there was no getting out of this one.

"May? There is, isn't there."

"Don't worry, Uncle Ethan knows him."

My brother groaned, "Mayaleena!" He said, using my full name, which meant I was totally in trouble, "do mom and dad know?"

"Of course not, do I tell them anything?"

"Who is he?"

"The son of a friend of Uncle Ethan." I felt horrible lying to my brother. But what could I say, the Pharaoh of Egypt?

"Why did Blake say he's kind of nuts?"

So it *was* Blake. Godamnit. I couldn't even force myself to be mad at Blake. "He is, kind of."

Pause. "You have a crazy guy staying in my apartment? For free?"

"First of all, he's not staying for free," not anymore at least, "second of all, it's gonna be my apartment in like, a month!"

"May, you're not getting the point! Do you know how dangerous that is?"

"Trust me, he's harmless, Marv." Lies. *Lies*. Gosh was he gonna hate me if he found out the truth.

Hesitation. "Are you lying to me May?"

Oh crap.

"Is he your boyfriend or something?"

"What?"

"Please tell me you're not trying to impress a boy or something!"

"Ohmygosh, Marv! No!"

"I can hear the lie in your voice!"

I rubbed my face hard with my hand. "Ugh, Marv, no. I promise he's just a guy who needs help. Auntie Maya would have been proud of me." I was kind of trying to guilt trip him now.

"Auntie Maya would not be proud if this stranger turns out to be a psychopath—"

"He's not a stranger, Auntie Maya knew him too." She also did her PhD on him or something like that.

I imagined him rolling his eyes, "where's he going to go when you move in?"

"I don't know. He can worry about that later."

"May... I don't think—"

"He saved me from Viktor."

My brother fell silent.

Well, that was kind of a lie. It wasn't like Viktor came after me or anything like that on the night of my birthday. It was Dom who came after me... but who knows, if the Pharaoh didn't appear out of nowhere then Dom may have gotten his way and dragged me back to Viktor and then who knows what would have happened.

So basically, he saved me from Viktor.

"What the hell happened with Viktor?" My brothers' voice was suddenly filled with worry.

"It's a long story, trust me. But I haven't seen him since so don't worry," I rubbed my face again.

"May—"

"Trust me, Marv," I started, getting out of bed, "he's not a bad guy. Blake even likes him." Right?

He let out a breath, "good morning, by the way."

I chuckled, knowing that I had won the argument. "Good morning!"

After my conversation, I got ready in a dress and went straight to my brother's apartment. When I got there, Akhenatem was sitting at the kitchen's island, flipping through a Dr. Seuss book that I found in my house.

"This story is useless," he said as I took off my shoes. He didn't say hello or even look at me, "why is this creature forcing the other to eat the eggs and ham?"

I chuckled, walking over to him after picking up the now kind of heavy Neferkiti, "the story is trying to teach people to try something before they say they don't like it."

He narrowed his eyes, "pointless."

"You have to admit though," I said, opening the fridge, "its really catchy and somehow likeable."

He didn't respond, but when I turned to look at him, he definitely looked like he was enjoying it.

I smiled and looked into the fridge, only to realize we had run out of milk. "Oh no," I said, closing it, "we're out of milk."

Akhenatem ignored me, still reading the children's book.

I really wanted a coffee.

So I walked back to the door, "I'm going to get myself a coffee."

His head shot up as he turned to face me, finally. "I want one too."

"Then c'mon. There's a shop right across from the apartment."

He got up from his seat, walked to his room and in a couple of minutes, he came back dressed in something more appropriate for wearing outside.

I told Neferkiti that we'd be right back and then we headed out.

When we got to the coffee shop, I told Atem to sit down while I bought two coffees.

After grabbing both the cups though, I walked over to him and saw him staring outside the window, looking kind of like he was staring into space.

"What's wrong?" I asked as I put the coffee down in front of him.

He looked down at the coffee, "are you certain that there is no such thing as witchcraft or wizardry in your time?"

I sat down across from him, "not that I know of."

His eyes looked at me now, "You have no way of being sure?"

I shrugged, "I don't know how I could possibly find a wizard or witch, *if* they did exist." I knew that there were a lot of fakes. Who would charge me a lot of money, which I couldn't afford right now.

I was saving up for a bicycle, after all.

He looked back at the coffee before he pulled off the lid. "Then I'm truly stuck here."

I gave him a sad smile, not that it really mattered. "Do you miss it?"

There was a hesitation and then he let out a breath of annoyance.

I could easily tell that it was forced.

"It's not that I miss it. It's just that I am uncomfortable here," he said, dropping his face onto his fist and looking away, "the clothing is especially bad. How do men walk around with such restricting clothing? And the noise... it's always so noisy here. I can never get any peace and quiet."

He had a point, but I still didn't buy it. "Yeah right. I'm pretty sure you actually miss it."

He gave me an annoyed look.

And despite his attempt to look like he didn't care, it was completely obvious. He totally missed home. "What was your family like back in Egypt?" I asked before I sipped my coffee.

He ignored that.

"You have a brother, right. Older or younger?"

"Younger, of course. I wouldn't be king if he was older than me."

"And your parents?"

"My father is dead. My mother was alive. But I guess she's dead too now."

I hesitated, realizing what he just said.

And after a moment of processing, I felt horrible.

His entire family was technically dead.

It wasn't like he was just transported to a different country. He was transported to a different time... to the future. Everyone he knew was *dead*.

"I'm so sorry, Atem."

He looked at me, "sorry for what?"

"For your loss."

Now he snorted for real, but he didn't say anything.

I pouted my lips and watched as he sipped his coffee. He winced at the bitterness but then continued drinking it.

He had no one.

Maybe... that was why Auntie Maya wanted me to help him? I mean, if she actually *did* want me to help him.

I sighed and then looked at him, "hey, let's make a deal." He ignored me, but I knew he heard me so I continued, "let's be friends."

Now he looked at me. A smile appeared on his face but it wasn't a gentle smile or anything like that, it seemed like he was mocking me.

"Okay?"

"Why would I want to be your friend?"

I pouted again, "because I gave you a home, fed you, took care of you and taught you how to read and write?"

His smile faded.

"So, let's make a deal. We'll be friends."

"No, thank you."

"Everyone needs a friend."

"Not me."

"Oh, c'mon!"

"I do not need a friend."

I scoffed. "But you're a lonely, spiteful man."

"No, I'm not."

"Yes you are."

He rolled his eyes, "and you're a petulant child."

"I'm not a child. I'm eighteen."

His eyebrows rose, "eighteen?"

"Yeah!"

For some reason, the look on his face changed. I couldn't figure out how, but something about it changed.

"Why?" I asked. Why was he so shocked?

"You do not look eighteen."

"How old do I look?"

"Fifteen, at most."

I scoffed, "*what?*"

"Yes, fifteen."

"I'm eighteen!"

"Most eighteen year old women in Egypt have had, or are pregnant with, their first child."

I knew that. I knew in the past women had kids much earlier. But seriously? I looked like I was *fifteen*? I felt like I was twenty-two, though! (I loved 22 by Taylor Swift.)

"I'm eighteen." I repeated.

"Alright, I heard you the first time."

"Well, remember it."

When we got home, he went straight back to the island in the kitchen to work more on reading and writing.

Gosh was he a good student.

But after we ate lunch, he came over to the other couch. He sat down, facing me and I ignored him till I finally finished *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, I had only a couple pages left.

When I looked at him, he was impatiently staring at me.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"I have a proposition."

"Okay."

"I'll take you up on your deal..."

I wanted to laugh but I didn't, so I just nodded.

"On one condition."

"Okay, what's the condition?"

"That honey tasting crispy breakfast you made me one day, with milk..."

Honey Nut Cheerios? "Yeah."

"I want that every day," he said, firmly, "if you can provide me with that every morning, I will accept your request to be my friend."

I rolled my eyes but nodded, "fine. Deal." That wasn't too hard.

He nodded, "alright. You can be my friend."

"Okay, so let's do our first act of friendship," I smiled at him as I pulled a new book out of my bag, "I've noticed that you really like reading, so how about we read this together?"

I was certain that I was right about that. I brought over a ton of old children's book from my house and he really liked flipping through those. In fact, I think part of the reason he worked so hard to learn to read was so he could read those books properly.

But right now, he was only at Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss level.

He looked at the book's cover for a long moment before he spoke. "What's it about?"

"It's called For Whom the Bell Tolls by Ernest Hemingway," I looked down at the cover, "it's about a guy who goes to fight in the Spanish Civil War."

"A book about war?" He seemed interested as he moved from the other couch to right next to me.

"Yeah," I said, "I think it's also got some romance in it, but it's mostly about war."

"Fine. Let's read it."

But before we could read it, I had to give him a lot of context.

Obviously, after practically being raised by two Egyptologists, I found myself to be a history buff. I read a lot of history books in my free time and took a lot of history courses during high school. And this meant that I knew a good thing or two about our world history.

So I think I did a really thorough job explaining World War I, the great depression and what brought about the communist and fascist fighting which eventually led to the Spanish Civil War.

He was thoroughly intrigued.

But as I started reading the book to him, I was very shocked by the amount of interest I could see in his eyes.

And again, I found myself wondering if this potential nerd could really actually be the cruelest Pharaoh that ever existed.



Chapter 8 - [Beauty and the Mean Dad]

The next day proved to be the second scariest day since I met Akhenatem. The first day was obviously the day I was attacked by that crazy red-eyed man.

So why was this the second, you might ask?

Well, my father randomly decided to make an entrance in my life again.

It's probably obvious at this point that my parents and I weren't really close.

My mother and I would exchange some words here and there, but my father and I... oh god was it hell between my dad and I.

He was very disappointed in me. He hated that I chose not to become a lawyer and he made it clear.

I tried to not care about it but it really did hurt sometimes.

It sucked when you saw other girls your age being spoiled daddy's girls when I was here being treated like an outsider in my own family.

So yeah, we didn't talk much.

But when I woke up the next day in a fairly good mood since the day before ended off well with a pleased Akhenatem... I was shocked to see my dad at breakfast, telling me to get ready so that they could have a look at my brother's apartment.

In their mind, the apartment had been empty for quite some time now, so they wanted to see if it was still in a good enough condition for me to move in to.

To be completely honest, I was fairly certain that my dad just wanted me out of the house. ASAP.

Which was a good thing, for the both of us.

But the late notice was not a good thing.

"I'm kind of busy today," I lied, trying to stall for time.

"Make time," my tall, dark haired father responded, "I don't have time after today so figure things out and hurry up."

Hypocrite. Why doesn't he just make time?

My dad looked everything like my brother. Tall, dark haired, small eyed and clean shaved... but he acted nothing like my brother.

My dad's voice was harsh, kind of cold and had a hint of rudeness in it.

This voice of his was also one of the reasons I stayed away from him. I couldn't stand his harsh and criticizing voice.

My mom, who was my uncle Ethan's older sister, had dark eyes like me and pitch black hair, also like me. The only real difference between us was that she was very skinny and kept her hair fairly short all the time. She also had a harsh look, but at least her voice knew how to be nice too.

But today she wasn't going to spare me any kindness. She gave me an annoyed look which said, 'don't argue with your father.'

So, within a matter of minutes, I was sitting in my dad's car, panicking as we drove down towards the apartment.

Obviously, not only was Neferkiti there, but so was Akhenatem.

I was so screwed.

But then I came up with a genius idea, "can we please stop by grocery store. Please?" I begged, "I need to grab some tampons. My period just started." To be honest, I didn't even know if the grocery store had tampons. But we were already so close to the apartment and I couldn't think of anything else.

My mom gave me the annoyed look again, but this time it said, 'how dare you

Speak about such inappropriate things in front of your father?'

But whatever, it worked.

How could a male parent, or any male for that matter, say no to tampons, right?

So I ran into the store and called Akhenatem.

I prayed that he would pick up. He hadn't been using the phone much at all recently since he's been a little bit busier with things to do, so my chances of him picking up were much slimmer than before.

But he did.

He picked up.

"What."

I have never been so relieved to hear that annoyed, cocky voice of his, "Akhenatem, we are so screwed."

"What does that mean?"

"I need you to get out of the apartment."

He hesitated. "Why?"

"My parents are coming! They can't find out I'm keeping you there."

He groaned.

"Please Akhenatem! I'm begging you! Take Neferkiti and just leave, come out of the building and sit at the bench outside of it until they're done!"

"This is such a nuisance."

"Take her cat toys too—"

I put down my phone when I turned around and saw my mom enter the store.

"Is there a Starbucks here?" She asked when she reached me, "your father wants

coffee."

I shook my head, "no Starbucks."

"Oh. Did you get your things?"

I nodded and patted my bag, which had only books in it.

"Good, then hurry up, let's go. Your father and I have a lot of work to do."

So we left.

And within another minute, my dad pulled his car into the visitor parking and we were walking towards the building.

I was holding my breath the entire time because I didn't see Akhenatem sitting at the bench just outside the building.

That meant he was still inside.

I tried to think of all the things I could say to my parents once they saw Akhenatem. But there was nothing I could say that wouldn't either get me into trouble, or have my parents call the cops on Atem.

But just as we reached the elevator, I let out a loud breath of relief.

After the elevator doors opened, Akhenatem walked out, Neferkiti in his arms and a grocery bag of cat toys in another.

The innocent Neferkiti meowed when she saw me, but Akhenatem kept a tight hold of her and kept walking.

He didn't say anything to me.

But he tried to make it clear that he was annoyed as he stared me down while he walked by.

When I mouthed 'thank you' to him though, he looked away and my family continued into the elevator as if nothing had happened.

My father examined the apartment completely and I didn't get why he was doing

it, but I really didn't care. All I cared about was making sure I could come up with a good enough lie when he asked me about anything suspicious.

When asked about the new food in the fridge and cupboards, I simply said that I was studying here for exams.

When asked about the extra clothes in the guest room, I simply said "ask Marv, I don't know." I knew they wouldn't actually ask him.

But anyways, for most of the questions, I was able to answer them properly. The point was, they weren't suspicious of any random person staying here while they didn't know it.

Finally, when my father returned to the living room, where I was sitting, I was relieved, thinking that he was done.

"Start moving in here now. You should be completely moved in by the end of the week, understood?"

I nodded, smiling. Gosh, was I so excited.

"For the rest of the summer, you will continue to live here for free. But once September comes around, you will start paying rent."

My smile faded.

Even my mother looked surprised by this.

"Most apartments in the area cost about five hundred dollars per month but since you're my daughter, I'll only make you pay four hundred."

I stood up, scoffing. "Marv never paid rent!"

"Well, Marv did exactly what we wanted him to do. He didn't apply to the best university in the country for something as pathetic as Evolutionary Biology and Anthropology. He went straight into law and now he's in Law School."

I just stared, my jaw dropping further with every word he said.

He was actually, *actually* just trying to spite me.

My parents owned this apartment. They paid the full price when they bought it. Any money that I would pay for rent was going straight into my father's pockets.

I looked at my mother, hoping for her to help me out. But of course, she said nothing.

She always agreed with my dad.

So I took a deep breath and held my head high. "Fine." I said, "I'll give you four hundred dollars every month."

"Good." My father said.

And without a goodbye, he and my mother left.

I slumped down onto the couch and just stared at the T.V. for a moment before remembering that Akhenatem and Neferkiti were still waiting outside.

So I called Akhenatem, who conveniently took his cellphone out with him.

"What?" He answered like he always did.

"My parents are gone, you can come back up now."

Within moments, he had returned into the apartment.

He rambled on about how annoying the entire situation was and I didn't argue back. In fact, I was barely listening.

I didn't know what this feeling inside me was... but I figured that I was heartbroken.

As always, my father proved to be cold and heartless.

A father was supposed to protect you.

He was supposed to do everything he could to make you happy.

And here mine was, making me miserable.

Akhenatem was sitting on the other couch, still rambling away. But he stopped

talking when my lip quivered.

I knew I was going to start crying so I called the next best thing I had to a father.

Uncle Ethan.

I was going to be charged long distance... but I didn't care.

I needed to vent.

So as soon as he picked up I burst into tears and told him how angry I was at my father and how much I wanted more than anything to never see him again.

And Uncle Ethan listened.

He listened and told me that no matter what happens, he would be here to help me.

He told me that if it ever got too hard, I could leave my brother's apartment and come live with him or with Grandma Seetha.

But I said no to that.

I told him that I was going to prove my father wrong.

He thought I was incapable of doing anything right... but I was going to prove him wrong.

In fact, I was going to pay the full five hundred dollars that he said I was technically supposed to pay.

And while I was doing that... I was going to save up as much money as I could.

When I finally had enough, I would buy my own apartment.

I'll show him.

I'll show him what I'm made of.

I'll show him that just because I wasn't following *his* dream doesn't mean I'm a failure.

Akhenatem, who had obviously heard my entire conversation, didn't say a single word to me that day.

I had noticed though that he would glance over at me a couple times...

But he would never say anything.

I went out with Ro later on and she promised me that starting tomorrow she would help me move out of my father's home.

Unfortunately for me, Ro was staying at Alec's place for first year. She invited me to come there but I said no, obviously. She too was paying rent but even Alec didn't like the idea of that. He only said okay to her paying half because she probably beat him into it.

I'm joking, of course, she wouldn't beat *Alec*.

But anyways, I didn't want to intrude.

Aurora already had the plan of moving out and getting her own apartment once second year came along and we decided that we would get it together.

And honestly, the thought of that day made me feel so much better.

So after spending the day with her, I went back to my brother's apartment feeling much better.

Despite my father being a jerk, it was nice to know that I had an amazing uncle and an amazing best friend.

When I got home, I walked in to Akhenatem sitting on the couch watching Criminal Minds. He normally didn't watch shows with real people... so I was kind of surprised.

"Hey," I said as I walked into the kitchen, "you hungry?"

Akhenatem got up from the couch and walked towards the kitchen as well. "Yes." He said as he sat down at the island.

I was craving macaroni and cheese so that was what I was going to make.

I know it was bad for us... but hey. Macaroni and cheese, right?

But as I made it, he spoke up, "so you and your father do not get along?"

My back so to him, and I just shook my head.

"Why?"

Now I turned and looked at him.

He had this look on his face that probably said: "you have to tell me. I'm the King."

But I sighed and went back to mixing the cheese powder into the macaroni, milk and butter. "He's disappointed in my decisions."

"What decision?"

"My decision to pursue something different than what he wanted."

"And what's that?"

I sighed again and reached up into the cupboard for two bowls. When I turned around and placed one in front of him, his eyebrows rose, "well?"

I leaned forward onto the counter and decided to wait for the macaroni to cool down a bit. "My parents are lawyers. So is my brother... and so were my grandparents. It's kind of a family thing."

"So they want you to be a lawyer as well."

I nodded.

"We had lawyer's in Egypt," he said, "what exactly do you find so unappealing about the job?"

I pulled over a chair and sat down across from him. "It's not that there's anything unappealing about the job. I just don't think it's for me."

"What do you want to do?"

My shoulders shrugged slightly and I looked at my hands, which were still holding the spoon I used to mix the macaroni. "I want to be a professor... a teacher for older kids."

He nodded, but said nothing.

"But to be a professor... it'll take years and years of... training, I guess you can call it. I'll have to finish my undergrad, which is four years, then I need my masters degree, which is another two or three years, then I need my PhD, which is most likely an extra five years."

It was obvious that the terminology I was using just blew over his head. But he read between the lines and figured it out, "eleven to twelve years of training?"

I nodded.

"Well, you must *really* want to pursue it if you plan on devoting that much of your life to something."

I nodded again.

"And what is this argument about rent? I understand that rent is what you pay for living somewhere?"

"This apartment belongs to my father. He paid it off completely so there isn't a need for me to pay rent. From what I get about real estate, he *could* give it to a stranger and ask them to pay rent as a sort of profit for him, which is fine," I picked up the pot with the macaroni and started putting it into our bowls, "but the problem is, I'm his daughter, not a stranger. What's worse is that my brother lived in this apartment for the full four years of his undergrad and my parents didn't take a penny from him."

"A penny?"

"It's... uh... like, the smallest form of currency."

"Ah, I see."

"But yeah, they took nothing from him and even bought him a car to drive around in and also paid for his gas and sometimes food too." I threw the now empty pot into the sink and filled it with water while pouting. Then I pulled out some forks, handed one to Akhenatem and then sat down in front of him. "I just don't think that's fair. I didn't get a car from them... In fact, I don't get anything from them. I save up my own money and pay for all of my things on my own. The least they could do was allow me to have some rest during my first year of University and not have me worry about paying rent." I put a spoonful of macaroni in my mouth and relaxed at the taste.

"I see."

"I'm probably going to have to get another job," I sighed. I'm sure if I asked Grandma Seetha to give me a hand, she would totally give me a hand. But I didn't want to put that much pressure on her.

On top of rent, I had to pay my own tuition fee as well. I was getting a loan, but since my parents were pretty well off, that loan wasn't exactly enough. And I was getting a scholarship... but again, it wasn't a lot.

Either way, my easy, breezy first year life was going to go down the drain.

But I had to think positively.

I mean, I'm sure there were *a lot* of other kids at school who had the same issues as me. I'm sure *most* kids are not getting help from their parents, just like me.

I could get through this.

I'm sure I could.

"How are girls treated in Egypt?" I suddenly asked Akhenatem, "you probably think I'm a wussy, right? They must go through hell there."

"Wussy?"

"Coward."

"Oh," he said, "no."

I looked at him, "really?"

"Women in Egypt are generally not treated so poorly by their father's. Generally, of course. There are *many* exceptions. But fathers generally cherish their daughters in my nation. They are the bearers of life, after all. Without them there would be no means of creating heirs."

Wow. Nice to know that my father treats me worse than the ancient fathers treated their daughters. Yay for modernity.

"Though, even more important than an average woman is a mother," he kind of had a distant look on his face as he said it, "a mother is the most important being in one's life. The world cannot continue to exist without mothers."

"Huh," I said. I had a bad relationship with my mom too, "were you close to your mother?"

He shrugged, "however, what I do know is that many other nations treated their women like slaves. It's horrid. It's one of the reasons for why my people despise foreigners."

I had learned once that the Ancient Greeks practically hated women aside from sex. Women were the cause of their misery, as told through the story of Pandora's Box. I didn't know how true that was, though... and I was sure that was a generalization. There *had* to be some men in that entire population that actually loved their wives and daughters.

But I smiled sadly, "I'm a wus, really," I sighed, "there are a ton of girls in this world who get it worse than I do."

Tons of girls have to deal with abuse and rape and all kinds of horrors.

And here I was, complaining about the fact that my fairly rich daddy refused to help me with higher education fees.

I shook my head, *get over it*. I said to myself, firmly.

"I'm lucky," I said, "I'm really lucky."

He looked at me.

"I'm going to the country's best university to get the best education that could possibly be offered. There are going to be some obstacles, obviously. I'm just going to have to face them." I said, but as I said it, I looked up at Atem. "That's what life is, right? If anything, by the end of this, I'll just be a better person."

He kept watching me, a sort of curiosity in his eyes.

"I don't need his help," I continued, "I'm a strong young woman and I can fend for myself. I'll prove it to him. I'll prove it to him and get far in life and then one day, he'll come to me and tell me he was wrong. He'll apologize for not being there for me and when he does I won't even care because I never needed his help." I put another spoonful of macaroni in my mouth when I finished.

And then, to my surprise, Akhenatem let out a laugh.

At first, I thought he was making fun of me.

But when he looked at me with a small smile on his face, I bit my tongue and held back my words of annoyance.

"Good for you," he said, "this is the first time I've seen you act like a woman."

And then I blushed.

Not because of his words, but because he had a *really* nice smile.

The next week was kind of hectic. I had to send Akhenatem to work with Grandma Seetha every day because Ro was over practically all the time helping me move in.

Akhenatem didn't complain much, partially because Grandma Seetha was really friendly to him.

One thing she made him do was fix things. Some of the tables were wobbly, so she taught him how to use the screwdriver and he spent an entire day fixing the wobbly tables.

Another day was spent with him helping her ice a bunch of cupcakes for a

wedding. Apparently she iced the cupcakes and he put sprinkles on them.

He washed windows, cleaned dishes and overall... Akhenatem was slowly becoming everything you would *not* expect from a man who was supposedly an evil Pharaoh.

Weirdest of all, Grandma Seetha adored him.

She liked that he didn't talk much, which she took as him being shy. And she liked that he was hard working, which was probably because he knew he had nothing better to do.

She would even make him these amazing lunches that he would come home and tell me about. He would compare my cooking to hers and tell me that I basically sucked.

But the best part about all of this was that he could walk there and back on his own.

I had added two new words to his texting autocorrect vocabulary. When he texted 'A' it would autocorrect to ARRIVED. When he texted 'L' it would autocorrect to LEAVING.

I felt like a mom but I really did worry about him getting there safely. I literally watched him from the balcony and then waited nervously for a text from him.

And thankfully, he never forgot to text me when he got there and text me when he was leaving.

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays though, Blake would drop him off after working out together, which eased my worries a little.

But still, I couldn't help but feel proud of him for being able to get there and back on his own.

On the Friday of move in week, Alec had joined Aurora and I since we decided to move the heavy furniture on the last day.

So he brought over his dad's pickup truck and helped me bring in my vanity, my desk and my two bedside drawers. And by the end of the day, I was officially

moved in.

The Master bedroom in the apartment was really big, which was more than perfect for me.

My brother had painted the walls of his room grey, which I originally didn't like. But now that my white furniture was in here and my pink bed sheets were now on the bed... I realized that white, grey and pink were a good combination.

My brother's empty walls were now covered in posters. Outside of the bedroom I had a lot of picture frames hanging here and there.

I put out some new flowers too and I was a big fan of statues so I had a couple statues lying around here and there now.

I had made this place *my* home to the best of my capabilities and overall, I was satisfied.

So after a full day of heavy lifting and finishing the moving off, I sat on my bed and decided to clean out my makeup drawers.

Despite my bedroom door being closed, I knew Akhenatem was home when Neferkiti jumped from the bed and started to put her paw on the door.

I smiled at her and just as I stood up, the doorbell rang.

He greeted me with a nod and updated me on the meal that he was given for lunch today.

As he updated me, he followed me into my room and stopped at the door, surprised at the change.

He walked in and looked specifically at one poster.

It was a poster of Daenerys Targaryen from Game of Thrones. My favourite poster, actually.

"I do not... have a... g-gentle..." he read it out loud, "heart?"

Yeah, his reading had definitely improved. I smiled, rather proud, as I sat down

on my bed, my makeup still scattered everywhere.

"Who is this?" He asked.

"She's a character from a book and T.V. show. I adore her."

He looked at the poster again, "I do not have a gentle heart," he said the sentence again, "do you have this painting as some sort of motivation for you?"

I chuckled, "I guess."

He stared at the poster for another moment and then turned around and walked around the room.

As always with new things, he touched it all. He touched every poster and every picture frame and everything else that could be touched.

Then, when he was done, he came and sat down on my bed in front of me. He picked up some of my makeup, wanting to touch those too.

"What's all this?" He asked.

"Makeup."

He seemed interested. More interested than most boys usually are in makeup.

He picked up my bottle of foundation and shook it. Then he put that down. He moved on to blush, touching the powder and covering the back of his hand with it. Then he moved on to eye shadow.

I watched him for a moment before I let out a laugh.

It was kind of cute, I had to admit.

He ignored my laugh though, and while he explored my collection of makeup, I continued on with the cleaning.

I had to dump out some of the makeup, since they were old. But eventually, I came across liquid eyeliner that I purchased a while ago and forgot about.

I usually didn't use liquid eyeliner, since I didn't go for a dramatic look. I usually

just used a pencil and lined my waterline.

But now that I found this liquid eyeliner, I decided to give it a try.

I got up from my bed and walked over to my vanity. I decided that I was going to try to do the cat eye. I had a lot of faith in myself so I was sure I could get it right. I watched a lot of makeup videos and I've seen people do it a ton of times, including Ro. So I should be able to get it.

And once I finally winged it out, I opened my eyes wide, blinked and then frowned.

I messed it up.

Atem, who I hadn't realized was watching me, let out a snort.

I turned around and frowned at him as I walked over to the bed, "I want to see you try."

Then, to my surprise, he reached out and grabbed the liquid eyeliner brush from me. "Sit down," he said, patting the spot on the bed in front of him, "and let me do it."

I snorted, but wanted to see what he could do. It would be funny and I could laugh about it later.

So I sat down in front of him, "if you waste any of it, I'll kill you."

He didn't respond. Instead, he harshly rubbed off the mess I made with his thumb and then grabbed my chin with his right hand, the brush in his left.

And suddenly, my heart started to beat a little faster. I felt my cheeks burn up a bit at the thought of how close he was sitting.

Putting makeup on me.

Gosh, was this weird.

But silently, I felt the brush run along my eyelid. He finished the first eye quickly and the second eye even quicker. "There."

I opened my eyes and blinked a couple times. Then I stood up, walked over to the mirror and scoffed.

It was perfect.

He did my eyeliner better than I ever had, "how..."

"I'm from Egypt," he said as he tossed the brush at me, "I used to decorate my eyes on a daily basis, and as a child I did it for my brother."

I looked at him for a moment and then looked back in the mirror. As I examined my perfect lined eyes, I wondered if I could get him to do it for me every day.

But then I let out a laugh and shook my head before I walked back to my bed, "sometimes you really impress me, Atem."

He smiled the small smile which I had come to really like and then spent the next half an hour watching me clean out my makeup while I explained what each product was meant to do.

After cleaning up, I changed into my PJs and took out my contact lenses, replacing it with my rather large hipster glasses.

I had changed up the washroom a bit too... adding a nice but small painting to the wall and changing the shower curtain as well.

But when I walked out of the washroom, Akhenatem, who was sitting down at the couch flipping through another children's book, spoke out. "Why are you still here? Should you not be headed home?"

"I'm staying here from today on." I said, bending down and lifting the sleepy looking Neferkiti into my arms.

"Oh." He simply said.

I walked over to where he was, wanting to know what he was reading.

But when I reached him, he looked at me and was startled, "what the hell is on your face?"

I hesitated, sitting in the seat next to him, "my glasses?"

He narrowed his eyes, "there's no sun in here to get protection from—"

"These are regular glasses," I said, pushing them up, "not sun glasses. I need them to see."

"To see? You never wore anything before—"

"During the day I wear contact lenses. They're basically glasses but you put them in your eye."

"*In* your eye?"

I nodded.

He was totally baffled.

I took my glasses off for a moment, "I can't see properly without them."

And to my annoyance, he held up his hand, "how many fingers am I holding up."

God did I hate when people did that.

I smacked him with the back of my hand and put my glasses back on.

"Are you blind without them?"

"No," I said, "not blind. It's just blurry."

He still looked shocked.

Eventually, I just rolled my eyes, "forget about it, okay." I didn't want to bring attention to my lack of 20/20 vision. "What book are you reading?"

He flipped to the cover. It was *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

"I thought it would be easy to read," he sounded disappointed.

"That's a really good story." I said, I really liked that book. "We could read it together, if you want."

We were already finished For Whom the Bells Toll and he really liked that book. We also read The Great Gatsby.

We weren't currently reading a book since I was so busy with moving in, so why not.

He handed to book to me, "alright."

I smiled, flipped open to the first page and started reading.

"Once when I was six years old I saw a magnificent picture in a book..."

And as I read with him, all of the worries that I was originally thinking about slipped my mind, as they always did when I read.

Then, I wondered if the same thing happened to him. Maybe that was why he liked reading so much.

Maybe he was the same as me in that sense.



Chapter 9 - [Beauty and the Rescue]

Akhenatem joined me on my trip to the campus of Oakville University. It was a huge campus and I wanted to get to know the area before school started. Aurora was supposed to join me, but her aunty in another city was really sick so she had to go visit her with her family.

In fact, we were supposed to go to Frosh week together... but she wouldn't be able to make it to that either.

I decided I was going to still go though... mostly because Aurora forced me to and also so that I could make some new friends.

But that started tomorrow.

Today, I was just exploring the beautiful campus. It was a two hundred year old campus so a lot of the buildings were absolutely gorgeous.

Even Akhenatem agreed to that.

So we spent the entire morning exploring and then when we were done, we went out for lunch.

The next day was the start of Frosh Week. It was basically a week of orientations for all of the first years who wanted to meet new people before school started.

Which meant I wouldn't be spending much time with Akhenatem.

And he was fine with that.

As usual, he went off to work with Grandma Seetha on his own and had no complaints.

In the meantime, I made a couple new friends. The one who I spent the most time with was a party animal and pretty cool girl named Sunny.

Sunny was a gorgeous Asian girl with flawless skin and a fun personality. Her eyes were dark and her hair was black with blonde ends and she had this amazing sense of style.

But Sunny was definitely one of my cool new friends.

We were in the same group during frosh week and she commented on how much she loved the thickness of my hair. And that's how we started our new friendship.

It was because of her that I decided to go clubbing on the last day of Frosh Week.

According to the Frosh Leaders, an entire club had been booked out for our students that night and all we needed was to pay ten dollars.

The fun Sunny thought that was amazing and made sure that I agreed to come.

We even went shopping for an outfit together.

Unfortunately for me, she picked out my entire outfit... and though it wasn't exactly my style, she made me promise to wear it.

So that's what I wore.

After getting ready, I walked out of my bedroom and saw Akhenatem freeze when he saw me.

"*What* are you wearing?"

I felt my cheeks burn up.

I was wearing these black high-waisted jeans and a black, tight crop top that showed a tinie-wenie bit of the top of my belly. It was supposed to show a lot more but I kept pulling the top down and the bottoms up.

I straightened my hair so it looked longer than usual, falling down to just below my hips. And of course, I had on a full face of makeup.

Though Atem looked shocked, I had taken a picture of myself and sent it to

Aurora and she said I looked "SMOKIN'!!!!"

I hesitated as I looked at Atem who was waiting for my response, "does it look bad?"

He let out a breath then looked away, getting back to eating his granola bar on the couch, "well... no..."

I smiled and walked over to him, taking a seat next to him.

He turned his head and watched me for a moment, and when I handed him my liquid eyeliner, he rolled his eyes.

"Please." I smiled and closed my eyes.

And despite mumbling about how annoying I was, he grabbed my chin with one hand and did my eye makeup for me.

When he was done and I looked in the mirror, I was totally pleased.

With that, I picked up my purse and headed for the door. "I definitely won't be long." I didn't like clubbing, obviously.

Especially since the last time I went clubbing it went totally wrong. To be honest, I had hoped that I would stay for maybe half an hour, and then head out.

I would use the excuse that my parents didn't want me to be out past ten or something.

"Where are you going?" He joined me at the door.

"Out, with a friend," I said, putting on my black high heels and becoming a couple inches taller. I had no ideas how I was going to manage the entire night with these heels on.

I mean, I did have my flats in my purse, just in case.

But gosh was it going to be annoying to have to carry the heels home.

"But anyhoo, I'll be home in maybe an hour or so," I said, "keep your phone near, just in case I get kidnapped or something."

He narrowed his eyes, "what?"

"Just kidding," I grinned. Well, I was only semi kidding. This would be the first time I'd be walking around in this area so late at night.

"I'll see you later," I said.

And he nodded his head and with that I was off.

I met Sunny at the subway station as planned and we took the subway to the club.

Surprisingly, or unsurprisingly, she couldn't get over how perfect my eyeliner looked. She loved wearing eyeliner and complained about how she couldn't ever get it right.

I told her I would teach her. Which meant that I would need Akhenatem to teach me.

That wouldn't be too hard, right?

That was the least he could do for me teaching him how to read and write.

When we got there though, I realized that clubbing had proved to just *really* not be my thing.

Even the club that we went to for my birthday night seemed better. Here, not only were there not many people, but it just overall sucked.

Sunny thought it was a crazy bore too. She said that she figured it would suck, since the University arranged it after all. She compared it to your grandma organizing your birthday party. But she didn't imagine it would suck this bad.

So literally, after twenty minutes or so, the two of us headed out.

We took the subway back home together and spent most of the time complaining. She told me that she would for sure take me clubbing again, but the next time around we would have a blast.

Honestly, as long as Aurora was there the next time, I would be fine.

We parted ways at the station that we met at. She went to the dorms of the residence she was staying at and I headed back to my brother's apartment.

However, the walk was a fairly long one. She could get home in at least five minutes. It would take me at least fifteen. So of course, the heels came off and I was holding them in my hands.

This was exactly the reason for why I wanted a bike. The subway station was fifteen minutes away from my brother's apartment but the campus was twenty. If I had a bike, I could get there in five minutes. But thanks to my dad, I had no extra money to spare for a bike anymore, which meant I'd have to wake up earlier and get home later.

I was kind of scared of walking home this late in the evening, alone, in a place that I wasn't exactly entirely familiar with yet. But the walk was mostly silent and no one bothered me, thankfully.

So soon, I reached my brother's apartment in peace.

I decided that I was too lazy to cook at the moment I reached the apartment. So I turned around and headed to the convenience store across the street. I was sure that they had something easy to prepare for Akhenatem and I, even if it may be slightly pricier than getting it at a grocery store.

I walked into the convenience store across the street from the apartment without much of a worry. I grabbed a couple chocolate bars and two bowls of instant ramen. The middle-aged cashier recognized me, since I did come in here often. So he smiled and greeted me and after paying, he told me to have a good night.

But when I reached the door and was surprised by someone entering.

It was Viktor and two of his friends.

I knew it was him instantly and pretended I didn't notice him as I walked by past him and out the door.

But he totally noticed me. And followed me back out the door, for that matter.

"Hey, May, right?" He said.

Really? Right now? After an entire night of peace I had to deal with trouble right outside my brother's apartment?

I pretended I didn't hear him.

But the second I knew he was following me, I pulled out my phone and called Akhenatem.

He picked up instantly. "What?"

"Can you come down?" I asked softly and quickly.

"Why?"

"I may need help. There's—" My phone was plucked right out of my hands.

I turned around quickly, "hey! Give that back!"

"Who you callin'?" Viktor asked with a grin, but he put my phone in his back pocket.

"That's mine!"

"I'll give it back to you," he said, "once you answer my question."

Viktor was a decent looking guy. He was tall, had blonde hair and even blue eyes. According to my brother, a lot of girls were actually into him. The only problem was that he wore clothes that were a couple sizes too big for him and had this mean look on his face.

And it was this look that made my brother's girlfriend dislike him and stay away.

This look and the fact that he was totally a bad kid. He dropped out of high school and I have no idea if he even graduated yet... even now, years later. He's gone to jail a couple times too and had a group of friends who basically thought they were some big gang.

Of course, I was kind of terrified right now.

But I knew he couldn't do anything to me.

Not here... in the middle of the road in front of my brother's apartment.

"We were supposed to meet up that night at the club. Why'd you stand me up?"

I bit my lip.

"Well?" He took a step closer to me and I could hear his friends snicker.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," I lied. But as I said the lie I wondered if it would be a bad idea to run into the apartment... yes, I would be safe, but then he would know where I lived.

Plus, he had my phone.

If I didn't have any money left over for a bike than I definitely didn't have any money left over to get a new phone.

But then again, maybe he already knew where I lived.

"I just wanted to ask if you wanted to start dating me."

I wanted to scoff. Did he really think that I was stupid?

But I didn't, I just narrowed my eyes at him.

"I mean, look at you, you're totally my kind of girl—" He reached over and squeezed my waist but I slapped his hand away. Perv.

"You're *not* my kind of guy." I said, firmly. And boy, was I proud of myself for saying that.

"That's what you think. How would you know if you never even gave me a chance?"

"I'm dating already," I lied.

I was going to say Blake. If he asked who, I would say Blake and maybe that would scare him away. He knew Blake, they also went to school together. And Blake was a cop, after all.

Viktor snorted and then grabbed my hand, "forget about that guy and go on one

date with me. Just one—"

"Let go of me!" I said as I tried to pull my hand away.

But he was stronger than I was.

I knew he wasn't going to do anything to me.

I mean, if we were in an ally or something, I would think otherwise.

But right now we were in the middle of the street.

I could see the cashier of the convenience store watching from the window.

And there were even a few people walking by.

If I screamed, I could get away no problem.

But that didn't stop me from being scared.

It was dark out and I was standing in front of this guy whom I've been terrified of for years. A guy who threatened to hurt me because my brother punched him in the face and made a fool out of him in front of a crowd.

I was suddenly jerked forward when he tugged at my arm. I let out a breath in panic and then kicked him in the knee.

He let go of me, cursing, "bitch!"

And I ran.

I thought I would get far too but one of his friends literally grabbed me by the hair.

And now I shouted in both pain and panic.

"You're feisty." The friend said as he turned me to face Viktor again.

Viktor grabbed my face with one of his hands and from the corner of my eye I saw the guy in the convenience store talking on the phone. I prayed it was the police.

"Listen, May," Viktor said, painfully squeezing my cheeks, "you're a kid that doesn't get it. Do what I say and this will be—"

He stopped talking when another person suddenly yanked me out of his grasp.

I was, rather aggressively, tossed aside. Some grabbed me and practically threw me to the ground but before I could fall I regained my balance and turned around to see Viktor's friend getting punched hard in the face by Akhenatem.

I let out a breath and smiled, relieved.

The friend that got punched in the face was literally knocked out. He crashed onto the floor and was just lying there with a bloody nose as Akhenatem dealt with the others.

He went for Viktor next, but the other friend tried to throw a punch at him.

Akhenatem dodged that punch with ease and kicked the second friend down.

He got back up though and charged at Akhenatem a second time.

I turned my head and saw Viktor running towards Akhenatem.

With a pocketknife.

I screamed at Akhenatem, telling him to watch out.

Akhenatem punched the second friend hard in the face too, knocking him out as well. But just as he turned around to face Viktor, Viktor slashed him in the right arm with a knife.

I started running towards the two of them but stopped when I saw that Akhenatem didn't even flinch. He simply looked down at the bleeding wound that stained the white long-sleeved shirt he was wearing and then glared angrily at Viktor.

Viktor took a step back, probably shocked by the reaction.

And then Akhenatem reached out and grabbed the knife right out of his hands, tossing it aside.

"Who the hell..." Viktor started, but then Akhenatem grabbed Viktor's neck with his left hand.

I could see the muscles under his shirt flex as he started to lift Viktor off his feet. With one hand. It was ridiculously awesome.

Viktor coughed and grabbed a hold of Akhenatem's arm, hitting it with his hands and trying to get him to let go.

"How *dare* you lay a hand on her," Atem hissed, "if we were back where I'm from, I would have had you *executed*."

"Calm the fuck down, man—" Viktor said before he coughed, "put me down!"

I ran over to them, "Atem, it's fine—"

"If I ever see you touch her again, I will rip that hand of yours right off your body," Atem said, "do you understand?"

"Alright man!" Viktor shouted, "I can't... breathe!"

And just as Atem dropped Viktor, who found himself in a fit of coughs after he reached the floor, a police car pulled up next to us.

"May!"

I turned around and to my surprise, Blake and another officer were running towards us.

And to my surprise again, Blake grabbed my face between his hands and looked at me, "are you okay?" He asked, sounding really worried, "the guy who called in said you were getting harassed... I was in the area and came as fast as I could—"

"I'm fine Blake," I said, touching his hand with mine and feeling my heart beat faster, though I was surprised that the cashier knew my name, "Atem rescued me."

Blake kept looking at me and then sighed, "I was worried it was Atem who was doing the harassing."

I shook my head and then he let go.

Blake turned and looked at the other officer, who was picking up Viktor.
"Viktor?" Blake scoffed.

Viktor turned his head and spat before looking at him, "hey pal, how you doin'?"

Blake shook his head before walking over and grabbing Viktor by the collar of his shirt. "You've got some nerve, ass-hole. Stay away from her, you got that?"

The other, older looking cop looked at me, "this guy wasn't part of it, right?" He asked, pointing at Atem.

I walked over to Atem, shaking my head, "no, he helped me."

"And who cut you, son, with what?" He asked Atem.

"That fool you call Viktor," Atem said, "with a pathetic excuse of a knife."

Blake grabbed a hold of Viktor as the other cop went to pick up the knife and the two other guys. Both of them were finally getting back up after being knocked out senseless.

"You're under arrest for the harassment of this woman and for the possession of a weapon, Viktor." Blake said as he handcuffed him.

I almost completely forgot about my phone, so when I told Blake, he grabbed the phone from him, and after reciting the rest of the police lines which you always hear in movies and tossing the grinning jerk into the police car, Blake walked back to Atem and I. He handed me the phone but looked at Atem, "should I take you to get that checked by a doctor?" He asked Akhenatem.

Akhenatem shook his head, "it's just a scratch," he said, "I've dealt with much worse."

Blake nodded his head and then patted Atem on the back, "thanks man. It's nice to know there's someone watching over her."

Akhenatem didn't say anything. Instead, he crossed his arms and looked away.

I smiled.

Blake then turned and looked over at the cashier at the convenience store who was standing outside now and gave him a cute two-finger salute.

I smiled at him too and waved my thank you.

Blake then turned back to me, "okay, I'm going to head back to work. These idiots will be sticking with us for a while so you have nothing to fear."

I smiled, "thanks, Blake."

He put his hand on my head and messed up my hair, "don't ever hesitate to call me if you need anything, May."

I nodded.

After Blake left, I loudly let out a breath and turned to Atem, who still had his arms crossed and was looking away. "C'mon," I said, grabbing a tight hold of his left hand with both of mine, "let me clean that up."

He muttered something that I didn't hear, but followed me as we returned to my brother's apartment.

I grabbed the first aid kit from under the bathroom sink and took it to my bedroom.

Atem was sitting on my bed, cross-legged, waiting for me, "it is just a scratch," He said.

I nodded, "yeah, yeah, but scratch or not we gotta clean it up. Who knows how dirty that pocketknife was?"

I got him to take off his shirt, which I proceeded to throw out. And as awkward as it was, it had to be done.

He was silent as I cleaned up the fairly ghastly wound. It was pretty bad, despite him saying it wasn't.

However, it was easy to clean up since he didn't fidget much, but to be

completely honest... his silence was bothering me.

"What's wrong?" I asked as I kept wiping the wound with one of the wound cleansing cloths that were in the first aid kit.

"Nothing," he said.

"It doesn't sound like nothing." Well, technically it did sound like nothing, since he was silent... but whatever, you know what I meant.

"Who were those men?" He then asked, "why did they attack you?"

"I don't know who the first two guys you knocked out were, but the guy who cut you hates my brother. He's a total jerk and gangster-wannabe."

"He attacked you because he does not like your brother?"

I nodded, "but, I guess he really didn't *attack* me per say—"

Atem snorted, "huh, what a *coward*. Too afraid to face your brother head on so he attacks the innocent girl? I've never seen anything more cowardly."

I chuckled and continued to bandage him up, "he *is* a coward, isn't?" And for some reason, knowing that made me a little less scared of the guy.

Atem nodded as he stroked the head of Neferkiti, who was sitting on his lap.

"A lot of guys are losers in this world though, to be honest," I continued, "brave, noble men are rare these days. Honestly, I know none aside from Blake... and I guess my brother. But I only add my brother to the list because I love him. I've never actually seen him do anything particularly brave."

"Your words remind me of the man that cursed me," Atem said, "he may have mentioned something about your era having no noble people. I don't really remember..."

As I thought of that red-eyed guy, I shuddered. But then I remembered something.

"Hey, Atem," I started as I paused the bandaging and looked at him, "thanks. For

saving me."

He was looking at me, but he looked away and shrugged when I finished thanking him.

I smiled, "I never really thanked you for saving me from that red-eyed guy as well... so thanks for that too."

"Sure," was his response.

I watched him for a moment and saw that he had a strange pouty look on his face. So I chuckled, making him look at me. "What's so funny?"

"Nothing." I smiled at him as I pinned the bandage in place. Then I patted his bandaged arm lightly, "done."

He looked over at his arm and was about to get up and leave but as I reached down to grab Neferkiti, I saw the red on his left hand.

"Look at you!" I gasped as I grabbed a hold of his bloody left hand. He probably hurt it when he grabbed the knife from Viktor. "Why didn't you tell me you hurt your hand as well?"

He groaned, but didn't argue with me as I dragged him into the washroom and ran his hand under warm water. The blood was a little dried so it took me longer to clean up this one.

When we returned to my room, I sat cross-legged in front of him and wiped this wound with a wound cleansing cloth as well. This one wasn't as bad as the other, but I could imagine how uncomfortable it would be to have a wound on your dominant hand.

I leaned forward as I wrapped the bandage around it and though my hair was falling forward into my face, I wasn't too bothered by it.

I was just wrapping a wound with bandages after all, not performing surgery.

But just as I finished off and pinned the bandage in place, I felt Atem push my hair out of my face.

He didn't do anything particularly interesting, like push it behind my ear or something. He just grabbed it in his fist and pushed it over my shoulder.

But even still, I looked up at him in shock.

I hadn't expected a guy like him to do me a favor like that.

Of course, I tried not think too much of it. However when I opened my mouth to tell him I was done now, I was surprised by him reaching out and touching my hair again.

My cheeks heated up slightly.

"How did you get your hair to be so straight?" He asked.

I hesitated before I spoke, "a hair straightener. It's something that straightens your hair."

He kept his eyes on my hair and then looked at my face. Then after another moment, he let go of my hair and I saw him gulp. "Oh." He simply said.

And then I got up, not really wanting to deal with this awkwardness. But just as I did, he spoke up again, "your regular hair looks better. It looks more full."

When I looked at him, he was looking away and had this strange, embarrassed look on his face.

We were both awkwardly quiet for a moment so as a way to break the awkwardness, I put my hands on my hips and gave him a silly smile, "I thought you said that my hair was disgusting!" I said, referring to that horrible insult around when we first met which resulted in me kicking him out for an hour or so and getting his butt locked up in jail.

He looked at me but then looked away again, "I... I was lying."

My shoulders lowered slightly.

Was he really... complimenting me? This guy who was not only a serious jerk but also the cursed, evil Pharaoh was complimenting me? And not just any compliment... he was complimenting my *hair*?

When he noticed my stare, he seemed to have an explanation, "Blake... Blake said that I should say nice things to you whenever you help me with something."

And then I laughed.

He looked annoyed by my laugh but as he got up to walk off and probably never compliment me again, I stopped him, "wait!"

He stood there and waited for me to speak, making it clear on his face that he was annoyed.

I grinned at him, "thanks, Atem," I said, "I'm glad you think my normal hair looks nice."

He let out a huff and walked off.

And for some strange reason, I found myself smiling for the rest of the evening.

Atem had no more compliments to spare after the hair one. But he also had no insults to spare either. And that was a good thing.

The next day, a Saturday, Aurora had finally returned home.

I was talking to her on the phone all morning, updating her on what had happened over night but when I reached the part where Atem came and rescued me, I paused.

"Well?" Ro asked, "what happened?"

And it was at that moment that I realized that I wanted to tell Aurora about Atem.

I couldn't lie about him forever.

I mean, classes started on Monday and she'd probably be coming over all the

time! I couldn't hide Atem from her forever.

I sat up in my bed and let out a sigh, "I have something to confess."

"Oh sheeeeeeet," she whined, "what's going on girl—"

I chuckled at her exaggerated concern, "I've been hiding something from you for a while... but I want to tell you—"

"What?!"

I had to pull the phone away from my ear because she practically screeched.

"Hiding *what*?"

"Can you come over?"

"Yes, I can come over." Aurora said, "I'm coming now. Right now. I've put my shoes on."

I laughed.

"If this is something serious, I'm going to kill you."

I laughed again, "yeah, I know."

And she only stopped nagging once she started to drive and had to hang up.

When I got up and walked out of my bedroom, I saw Atem sitting at the island in the kitchen, working on the grade three level English workbook. He avoided eye contact with me, but I leaned on the counter in front of him, "hey."

He looked up at me with only his eyes, not lifting his head.

"I'm going to introduce you to my best friend."

Now his head lifted to look at me properly, "I thought you did already." He said, probably referring to when Aurora came to the cake shop.

"No, I mean, I'm going to try and tell her who you really are."

He raised an eyebrow, but didn't say anything.

"She's either going to think I'm crazy, or she's going to think that I'm joking around."

"Then why tell her?"

"Because I don't like hiding the truth from her. She's my best friend."

"What's the point if she won't believe you?" He asked, looking back down at the workbook.

"Well, at least I'll know that I tried to tell her the truth."

He didn't say anything to that, so I went ahead and started to prepare some food for her so that we could have lunch together.

But moments later, there was a knock at my door.

When I opened it, I saw the frowning Aurora.

She had no makeup on and looked kind of tired, but she looked as lovely as ever of course. And I kind of loved it when she didn't wear makeup. Her freckles were super cute.

She was also wearing grey sweatpants and a white tank top that was short enough to show a little bit of her belly.

Her hair was out and fell to down to her waist but looked almost as if she had just woken up and came straight out of bed.

But whatever, she still looked lovely.

The frown, however, made me chuckle. "Wow, you haven't seen me in so long and you're going to just frown?"

That made her chuckle too as she stepped into the apartment and gave me a tight hug, "I can't believe I missed frosh week, *gah*."

"It's okay, it wasn't as cool as I thought it was going to be."

She pulled away and smiled, "alright, confess, sister."

I grabbed her hand and pulled her into the apartment and she was about to bend over to say hello to Neferkiti but she was surprised by Atem before she could.

Her eyebrows rose as she stared at Atem, who was still in the kitchen. She then looked at me, "are you two dating?" Was the first thing she asked.

"No!" I said quickly, feeling my cheeks heat up. "No way!"

"Then..." she started, "why is he here?"

"Okay, so this is going to sound super crazy and you're probably not going to believe me... but I really want to tell you the truth."

Aurora looked so confused. She blinked a couple times but then shook her head, "okay..."

So then the explanation began.

I started off with my dream. Then I told her about the birthday night issue and how Atem was the one who gave Dom a bloody nose.

Then I told her how Atem claimed to be a Pharaoh who was cursed and Uncle Ethan tested him and he proved that he probably was.

Then I told her how the red-eyed man attacked me.

I told her how he couldn't read or write and that I was teaching him, and also that he went to the gym with Blake to exercise and also that he worked at the cake shop with me.

Finally, I finished off the story of him rescuing me from Viktor.

Aurora was quiet as she listened to the story.

But when I was done, she let out a breath, "May..."

"I know... I don't blame you if you think I'm crazy."

She turned around and looked at Atem. Then she looked back at me, "how are

you sure that this is safe—"

"Well, he's been here for four months."

Ro let out a breath.

She then placed a hand in her hair and then sighed, "I don't know what the hell to think. I feel like I'm going to pass out."

I started to fan her with my hand.

She chuckled and pushed my hand aside. She then turned to Atem, who was facing us, leaning against the kitchen's island. "I don't know if I believe any of this... but whether I believe it or not doesn't matter."

She got up and started walking towards Atem. When she reached him, she stared at him for a moment, eyeing him and inspecting him. "If you dare hurt her... I will *rip* you apart." She jabbed her finger into Atem's chest, making his head jerk back.

I started to laugh.

"I'm a black belt in karate and I've done kickboxing since I was ten. You mess with her, you mess with me."

I laughed some more, knowing that Atem had no idea what any of that even meant.

So I got up and walked to Ro, "seriously Ro, it's fine," I said, "he's not going to hurt me."

Ro stared at him for another moment before she turned back and looked at me, "I'll deem him harmless when I feel like it."

I patted my best friend on the shoulder.

But right then, she cracked her knuckles, "but right now, I just want to deal with this Viktor kid. When's he gonna be out of jail?"

I shrugged but then laughed before I hugged my best friend.

Oh god, did Viktor have a hell of a storm coming his way.

But good for him.

The jerk deserved it.



Chapter 10 - [Beauty and the Cat Statue]

Surprisingly, Aurora warmed up to Atem faster than expected. It was clear that she didn't trust him, especially since this entire story sounded so crazy, but still, she was quick to stop being so hard on him.

She still didn't entirely believe everything I said to her. And it wasn't cause she didn't believe *me*. What she was worried about was that I was gullible and falling for some sort of elaborate plan.

But if that was the case... at least I had her to watch over me, right?

She told Alec the whole story too, with my permission of course, and on Sunday both Alec and her wanted to hang out at the mall with Atem and I so that they could both get to know him better and find out if he was actually a psycho or not.

Alec was always really good with people, so he and Atem got along very well.

Ro told me that Alec would be the best judge of character, so she practically forced me to stay back with her while Alec and Atem walked ahead of us.

Though Alec, like Ro, was skeptical of the whole Egyptian Pharaoh thing, he really did a good job at talking to him like he *was* a person who travelled through time. He was good at explaining things and treating Atem the way he wanted to be treated. And you can imagine... being inside a mall for the first time meant that Atem would have a *lot* of questions. And he did. But Alec answered them without a problem.

But that was Alec for you. A people person. Even if that 'people' was an Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh.

But as soon as evening came along, I had to grab a hold of Atem and say

goodbye to Alec and Ro.

By evening, both Ro and Alec had both deemed Atem to be okay enough to let me handle alone. They both thought he was strange but they didn't think he'd hurt me.

So they didn't worry about it when I told them we had to go now.

"We are walking past your home," Akhenatem said after we left the couple and as we passed my brother's apartment.

I chuckled, "yeah, Grandma Seetha invited us over for dinner. She told me to bring you too."

Grandma Seetha had talked to Uncle Ethan... and though he hated the thought of lying to his mother-in-law, the easiest thing to say was that Atem was the son of a friend who was in need of help.

She also knew that we were now "roommates" because we were both staying at the apartment. Since she was a traditional woman, she wasn't too happy with the thought that I was rooming with a boy.

But she didn't complain much since she liked Akhenatem and believed him to be a good boy.

If only she knew.

When we arrived, she looked so excited.

She told us that she barely ever had people over these days, especially since Uncle Ethan had been so busy in Egypt this entire summer.

He was going to be back tomorrow though, since he taught an Egyptian History course during the school year at the University of Oakville and school started tomorrow.

I was so excited for that.

"Have a seat, have a seat!" She said as she took us into the living room.

I sat down, but Akhenatem went exploring. He walked around the room, examining everything and I realized then that he's never been in Grandma Seetha's place.

I guess she brought lunch down for him.

So he explored and Grandma Seetha didn't seem to mind it.

While he explored, Grandma Seetha explained what she made for us and even made me come over so that she could give me some tips on cooking too.

She said that since I was living alone, I needed to learn the secrets of proper cooking.

After we ate, Atem returned to exploring while I helped Grandma Seetha wash the dishes.

But it was once I turned around to sit at the couches that I saw Akhenatem standing in front of my grandmother's wooden showcase, the glass door wide open.

I rolled my eyes, "Akhenatem! You can't open that and go into it!"

My grandmother looked up as I apologized to her and walked over to him.

But he looked at my grandma, "where did you get this?"

My grandma wiped her hands with a towel and put her glasses back on before she walked over to us too.

In his hands was a small statue of a cat. It was black and the cat was in a sitting position. It looked like any other ancient Egyptian cat statue that I'd seen in my lifetime. Nothing really special about it.

I had seen it in my grandmother's glass case before but I never cared to question it.

My grandmother was smiling, "oh, my daughter got it made for me! It's actually an exact replica of a real statue she found. She had this done because she loved the statue but she didn't believe in taking Egyptian artifacts out of Egypt." She

said as she walked off.

"Put it back, Atem—"

"It's okay, love," my grandmother said, returning the open kitchen, "he can look at it."

I hesitated.

"Atem, dear, do you know what it is? Or at least, what the original was?" She asked, putting the dishes away.

When I looked at Atem, I finally noticed the look on his face... he looked rather distressed. "It..." he hesitated, "it belonged to a queen..."

Grandma Seetha let out a laugh, "the mother of the pharaoh you were named after, to be exact!"

My eyes widened.

Wait.

So that meant...

This cat statue was a replica of something that belonged to Atem's mother?

"My daughter was devoted to researching about that Pharaoh. The cruel one," Grandma Seetha continued, "I didn't really understand why she devoted herself so much to just *one* Pharaoh. Ethan on the other hand studied multiple Pharaoh's but she just stuck to one. The Pharaoh who you share a name with."

Akhenatem was looking straight at her with a strange look on his face.

I couldn't quite decipher that look.

"Do you know the story of the Pharaoh's mother?" She asked, "quite a lovely story, it is. Heartbreaking, but lovely."

Akhenatem just kept staring at her.

"What's the story?" I asked.

Grandma Seetha stood near the table. "Apparently after the Pharaoh disappeared, she prayed day and night for his safe return at a temple. The story is that she refused to eat or drink or anything. She just prayed. Once the Romans invaded, they burned down the palace of the Pharaoh and eventually the temple she was in. It burned for days and days and days and she never came out. She died with the temple, or so they say, praying that her son would be safe."

"Burned..." Akhenatem said, rather softly.

"Maya would tell me that she couldn't even imagine how much this mother must have loved her son. In ancient Egyptian culture the belief was that if you were burned to death your soul would never reach the afterlife. She gave up her chances for an afterlife just so that the gods could hear her prayers."

I looked at Atem who was staring at the statue, now with a look that I have never seen on his face.

It was literally sadness.

He felt sad.

Well, obviously, I guess. That was his mother.

His mother...

"Anyways, Maya found it while doing research in Egypt. It was found in the tomb of the brother of the Pharaoh you were named after, and she paid a lot of money just so that she could borrow it and get a replica made. The real thing is back in Egypt, where it belongs, of course." Grandma Seetha smiled at Atem, "the younger brother's tomb was the last tomb ever built in Egypt, according to Maya, and most of what she knows came from that tomb."

"Why did..." Atem cleared his throat, "why did your daughter choose to study m—" he cut himself off, "that particular Pharaoh. Why was she interested in him?"

"Oh dear, it beats me." She laughed, "I assumed it was simply because Maya was a sucker for a good, dramatic story. Before she started doing her research, all anyone really knew about the last Pharaoh of Egypt was from Roman sources. And all they said was that his own people cursed him because he was

the cruelest man that ever existed. Apparently he killed hundreds and ruined the lives of thousands and his people had just had enough. But Maya..." She shook her head with a smile, "Maya just believed there was more to it."

I smiled. That totally sounded like Aunty Maya.

"She would come to me... and she would ask me to imagine if that Pharaoh was never really cruel. Imagine if he was just a lonely young man who messed up. She never really believed that someone could be *just* evil. There had to be more to the story. In fact, she was certain there was more to the story."

When I looked at Atem, he was frozen and listening carefully to Grandma Seetha's words.

"And when she found that statue, the cat, and found out about his mother... she had never been more certain." Grandma Seetha smiled, "there is nothing more true than the love a mother has for her child. *Nothing*. Maya knew that if the story of his mother was true then there was some sort of light within this man. Something within him that his mother was clinging on to as she sacrificed herself in that temple. So that made my daughter want to search for the truth, even though she knew that she may never find it. That's one of the downsides of being an Egyptologist and archeologist... or a researcher in general. You go looking for something that you may never find."

"Aunty Maya was as stubborn as she was nice," I said with a chuckle. But I was also trying to change the topic. I didn't really think Atem was enjoying what was being discussed right now.

Grandma Seetha nodded. "But it was shortly after that that she passed away," she sighed, "I always wonder if she was right. To be honest, I hope that one day, when Ethan has finished his own research... I hope he will go and find the answers to hers."

"I'm sure he will," I said with a smile, "uncle Ethan really loved aunty Maya. To be honest, I wouldn't be surprised if he's already started!"

Judging by the fact that he brought home that poem by Atem's brother... I'd assume that he already started.

I'd ask him when I see him next.

But pushing that aside... Atem fell silent for the rest of the evening with Grandma Seetha.

It was almost dark out when Atem and I started to make our way home.

He was walking ahead of me with his hands in his pockets and didn't say a single word.

I was watching him, trying to figure out what to say.

But I couldn't figure it out. I couldn't figure out what to say.

I couldn't relate to him.

I mean... how horrible would it be to find out that your mother burned to death for your sake? That's terrifying.

My mother and I didn't even get along very well and I...

Oh man... I didn't even want to think about that.

I sighed and reached up, wrapping my hand around my aunties ankh necklace.

She would have known what to say.

But again, here was another time where I wondered if this man was really, *really* evil?

Would an evil man mourn for his mother?

Would an evil man even remember the exact cat statue that belonged to his mother?

I sighed, shook my head, fiddled with the necklace a little longer and then ran up to Atem.

When I grabbed his hand, he looked down at me, "what?"

"Come, let's talk."

He pulled his hand away, "I don't want to talk."

I rolled my eyes, "well you have to."

"I don't need your pity, girl."

"I'm not pitying you," I lied, "I just want to talk."

He shook his head and kept walking.

But I grabbed his hand again and pulled him, "C'mon!"

He pulled his hand away again but glared at me this time, "*mind your own business*," he hissed, "you are *such* a nuisance!"

I was frozen in shock for a second.

Because since the first time I met him... this was the first time that I saw that look in his eyes again.

That frightening look.

The same look he gave me when we first met.

But I swallowed back the sudden fear that filled me and then glared at him.

I wasn't going to let myself be scared of him.

"Listen here you," I started, "I'm trying to *help*."

"You are not helping."

I ignored that, "my aunty Maya asked me to help you and I went out of my way... I got mixed up in all of this nonsense just to help you and you want to call me a nuisance?"

He just looked away, shaking his head.

"How *dare* you. After all I've done..." I let out a breath of exasperation and continued on, "you may think you're some all mighty demi-god Pharaoh but you're *not*. Not here!"

He looked back at me and narrowed his eyes.

"Here, you're a *normal* human being and as a normal human being you are *allowed* to mourn. You're allowed to show weakness and you're allowed to cry! Stop acting all big and bad because there's no point."

His glare didn't soften even slightly, "do not talk to me like that."

"I can and I will," I said, firmly, "I am *not* afraid of you."

"Well you should be afraid," he said as he started walking, "you don't know what I'm capable of."

"You see," I started, "this is the problem. I can totally see through you, you know."

He stopped walking and his hands balled up into fists.

"It's not that hard, to be honest," I knew I was making him mad but I kept going, "you have this mask on. You're pretending to be this horribly scary person when you're not."

"You'd be smart to silence yourself," he said.

I didn't. "If you were really this totally crazy evil guy, you would have made that clear by now. In all honesty, I *don't* think you're evil. So stop pretending you are."

He turned around to look at me, "you know *nothing* about me and the things I've done."

"Well, woop-de-freaking-do. Great, you've done a bunch of bad things, your mother prayed for you to have a second chance and here you are. Here's your second chance. But instead of making the best of what's been given to you, even though according to you, you probably don't deserve it, you continue to walk around here pretending to be a cruel and horrifying man," I said. "You're an idiot, that's all. An idiot who has no idea how much work it takes to take care of you. A nuisance? Ha!"

He scoffed and grimaced but I had decided now that I didn't want to deal with this. So I walked off.

And despite pretending to be all big and bad, the Pharaoh followed me home.

After changing, I went straight to bed, frustrated and annoyed and a little pissed off that I had to deal with this.

To make it all worse, tomorrow was the first day of university... a new chapter in my life.

And here I was, going to sleep annoyed and angry. How great was that?

However, I did fall asleep, eventually.

When I woke up the next morning, I ignored Akhenatem and got ready for school. I had to leave pretty early because my first class was a nine in the morning class and I still didn't have my bike.

I could have technically taken my brother's car, but parking near the campus was *super* expensive. There was no way I could ever afford such a luxury. Not when my dad was making me pay for rent.

Anyways, so without a word to Akhenatem, I left.

I did say bye to Neferkiti though.

My first day of school was... pretty awesome.

I had three classes that day and each class was an hour long and between each class I had an hour break.

My first course was 'Introduction to Evolution.' Super cool, huh?

My second course was 'Introduction to Anthropology,' and my third course was 'Introduction to Ancient Egyptian History.'

Yes, I was taking an Egyptian history course. Part of the reason I decided to take that was because I *did* think Egyptian history was interesting. The other part of the reason was because I *had* to take an intro to Egyptian History course in order to take the class that my uncle is teaching next year. That class was 'Ancient Egyptian History from the Middle Kingdom to the Roman Invasion.' How cool would it be to take a course that Uncle Ethan was taking?

But anyhow, my day went by very well. I enjoyed every class and all of my professors seemed to be pretty cool.

And around lunch time, Uncle Ethan even gave me a call, telling me he had just arrived back home and had a class to teach this evening. Because of that, he wouldn't be able to come over and check on me today. But he promised he'd come over tomorrow.

However, despite my day ending much earlier than my usual high school days, I was pretty exhausted when I got home.

I slumped down onto the couch and just stared at the T.V. for a bit. And it was that moment of silence I got which made me start to wonder where Akhenatem and Neferkiti were.

When I checked the time, I realized that he may have probably been with Grandma Seetha, Neferkiti too, since technically work didn't end till five. I was a little disappointed however, that Akhenatem didn't bother to text me about leaving and arriving.

But whatever, since I had nothing better to do, I decided to go and join them. Grandma Seetha probably needed the extra help.

Plus, I didn't have a cat carrier anymore, so I was worried about how Akhenatem would have taken Neferkiti over there.

So I locked the apartment and headed out.

When I got to Grandma Seetha's shop, I found myself stopping at the window. I peeked inside and saw Akhenatem standing next to Grandma Seetha, watching as she carefully decorated a cupcake with blueberries.

He looked so focused... it was kind of funny.

So I walked into the shop with a smile on my face and Neferkiti immediately scurried towards me when she saw me.

When Grandma Seetha saw me, she grinned, "look who it is! My little university student!" She walked around the counter and hugged me, "how was your first day?"

"It was great!" I said, still smiling, "tiring, but great!"

"That's great to hear!"

"How's he doing?" I jerked my chin in the direction of Akhenatem, who was ignoring me and putting blueberries on the cupcakes in Grandma Seetha's place.

"Perfect," she looked at him, "he's such a fast learner... he's a great help around here."

"I'm glad." I walked over to him and watched as he placed three blueberries on the center of the cupcake with utmost care.

It was a funny sight indeed.

But he continued to ignore me and so I decided to go into the back and get some work done too.

After a good couple of hours of working, it was finally time to close up the shop and get going.

Akhenatem and I left together, though he still hadn't spoken to me at all, so I walked with Neferkiti in my arms, behind him, while he walked ahead.

I found myself sighing at the silence. This was really awkward.

And to be honest, I was feeling more and more bad about my somewhat harsh words last night.

Sure, he was a jerk... but jerk or not, he had just found out his mother had burned to death and instead of helping him out, I yelled at him.

And maybe I was overstepping my boundaries.

Maybe the best way to help this guy was to leave him and his emotions alone.

I really had no right to try and force him to open up to me... even if I was doing so much for him.

That was his life and his past. He could tell me if he wanted and he didn't have to tell me either.

So I sighed again and just when I was about to look up and say my sorry's, I smashed into Akhenatem's back, almost squishing Neferkiti between us.

His back was really hard, for some reason, and I swear my nose must have hit a bone in his back or something because it hurt so bad that my eyes started to water and I almost dropped Neferkiti.

"Oh, god, Atem can't you give me some warning when you decide to stop walking?" I said as I rubbed my nose with my free hand.

He turned to look at me, "*you* should watch where you are going."

Okay. He had me there. I was in the wrong. I wasn't paying attention after all.

However, I pouted and was going to talk back.

But he sighed.

And then looked at me with this really weird... embarrassed... yet apologetic look.

"I apologize." He said, firmly. But the moment after he said it he looked away.

My shoulders dropped.

He was apologizing? To me?

He kept his eyes away and started to scratch his arm as he spoke, "You were right. You have done a lot for my sake and my attitude may not have been appropriate. So I apologize."

My heart did some strange sort of flip and when he finally looked at me, I smiled. "You're forgiven."

He didn't seem amused, "I just don't like to be in debt to anyone—"

"Yeah, yeah," I waved it off and walked past him with a smile on my face.

He watched me with an annoyed look on his face but followed. "Blake told me it would be wise to apologize to you, that's why I did it."

"Yeah, yeah," I repeated. I wasn't surprised. But the fact that he was apologizing did feel good.

I heard him groan behind me, "Listen, I'm not finished," he suddenly said as he grabbed my arm rather roughly. If it was any harder, I would have dropped the cat.

I looked at him, "ouch, buddy, that hurts."

He released my arm and hesitated, "sorry."

A second apology. Two apologies in one day? Wow, this must be my lucky day. "Okay, what else?"

He crossed his arms, "you said you want to talk about it... and Blake also said talking about it helps so—"

"Why do you always listen to Blake but not me?" I asked, feeling somewhat insulted.

He ignored me, "Blake told me that I look under the weather, whatever that means, and he said that it's good to talk about it."

I crossed my arms. Seriously though, was I not trying to tell him the same thing yesterday?

"He suggested that I talked about it with you since you're apparently a good listener."

I was, and I felt my cheeks blush at the thought that Blake said that about me, but I was still annoyed that this guy listened to Blake and not me. But I sighed and just smiled, "okay, let me be your therapist for tonight."

"My what?"

I hesitated, "um... your..." I sighed, not being able to think of another word, "never mind, just come with me." I grabbed his hand with my free hand and pulled him towards my favourite place to go sit down and think when I needed alone time.

We ended up walking for twenty minutes before we reached the loveliest park that Oakville had to offer its people.

By the time we got there, the sun was starting to set and honestly, it couldn't have been a more perfect sight. Even Akhenatem seemed to like the view.

This park was a beautiful place... it wasn't that big, but it had a large cobblestone covered spot at the very middle, surrounded by a couple benches where a lot of special events would happen. Often there would be small bands playing music for the park dwellers and as soon as December came around, a *huge* Christmas tree would be put up.

But if you walked past the main circle of the park and just kept walking, you would reach an even prettier spot. It was a spot that was raised over the main city of Oakville... basically like a cliff but not that high. However, despite its shortness, in the night time, you could see so many lights and if the sky was clear, you could see a huge lake that belonged to the neighboring city.

It was such a beautiful view.

When Atem and I reached the spot, there were already a couple people sitting around, but I knew if we waited long enough, it would empty out and we would get access to the best bench.

But for now, I sat down at a clean bench with Neferkiti sitting all well behaved in my lap, and made Atem sit down next to me.

"So tell me," I started, "tell me about your mother."

He leaned back against the bench and rolled his eyes before staring straight at the view as the orange-ish sky began to turn purple, "I do *not* want to talk about that."

I groaned and placed a hand on my head for a moment, "then what *do* you want to talk about? You said you wanted to talk."

He hesitated, but the annoyed look on his face softened slightly.

"Well?"

"You mentioned something..." he paused, "you mentioned something about this being... a second chance."

I looked at him.

"What did you mean by that?"

"A second chance?"

"You said my mother prayed for me and this is my second chance."

"Oh yeah," I smiled, turning around as much as I could in my seat to face him, "yeah, that's what I think."

"Well, explain," the annoyance returned to his face, making me roll my eyes.

"I think it's kind of obvious that this is some sort of second chance for you," I started, "and after hearing the story about your mother... I'm sure she had some role in you getting this second chance—"

"But what makes you think this is even a second chance?"

"Because don't you think it's kind of a coincidence that of all the places in the world you could have landed in when you were cursed... you landed right in front of me? Me? The niece of an Egyptologist who studied you before she died? A girl who had a dream the night before with this very Egyptologist telling her to help you? Wouldn't that be too much of a coincidence?"

He looked at me now.

"The wizard could have dropped you anywhere... he could have dropped you in the middle of World War I or II, or in the Soviet Union while Stalin was still the leader, or in the middle of any warzone ever," I reasoned, "and if he *had* to drop you in my time period then he could have dropped you somewhere where you could have gotten arrested or sent to a mental institution. Or he could have dropped you on a deserted island and forced you to fend for yourself. Or he could have dropped you on the cold streets of New York City where you would have made a complete fool of yourself and then gotten yourself detained!"

It looked like he was getting the point.

"But for whatever reason, he dropped you with me... and for all I know, I'm your best chance of having a, um, decent life, I guess."

"I see what you are saying."

I nodded, "it's just too much of a coincidence. There has to be more to it. And I think the 'more' is your mother's devotion to you. If god exists... god heard her prayers and god helped you. You know, god's all about helping you make up for your crimes. So maybe that's what this is. A second chance."

He nodded his head and looked straight ahead, definitely considering deeply what I had to say. "A second chance..." He pondered the thought a little longer before he sighed, "my mother... is a fool."

For some strange reason, despite the fact that he was basically insulting his mom, I smiled.

There was something about his words... and the look on his face.

Something that screamed love.

He loved his mother.

He leaned back and spread his arms along the back of the bench, "she gave up a chance to an afterlife for an ungrateful child like me."

"That's what mother's do." I said, thinking of Aunty Maya. She would have done something similar. She would have gave up everything to make her child happy. Even for me... and I wasn't even her real child.

There was a soft look on his face and his eyes looked kind of lost.

So I nudged him and gave him a wide smile. "Well... all you have to do now is prove it to her. Prove to her... and whatever gods there are out there... prove to them that you can change."

When he looked at me his expression changed completely, probably after seeing the look of sympathy on my face.

So instead of thanking me for the advice, he scoffed and then looked away.

"Pathetic," he said. But he left it at that.

I didn't argue with him.

I knew that this guy was really bad at showing that kinder side of him, which I was sure he had.

So instead, we just spent the rest of the evening watching the sunset while I listened to him complain about how crowded and ugly the city down below looked.



Chapter 11 - [Beauty and the Alcohol]

As unbelievable as this may sound... I kind of wasn't surprised when suddenly Atem became a little bit of a better human being. In the past, he tried oh so hard to keep up that image of being a tough guy and now... well, he still tried to keep up that image but sometimes he'd let it all go and be nice.

The prime example was with Grandma Seetha.

Atem treated Grandma Seetha *very* well.

He was still fairly quiet around her but he did all that he possibly could to keep things easy on her. Like, he never let her lift anything really heavy. And he always went out of his way to help her.

It was strange. But in a good way, of course.

With me... well, not *much* changed.

He definitely was a lot less snarky with me. He still barked at me sometimes when I did things that annoyed him but he stopped with a lot of the insults.

He stopped calling me ugly, that's for sure.

In terms of his education, he was improving drastically. As I've said multiple times before, Atem was a fast learner. By the time October rolled in, he could read small chapter books with some ease... though vocabulary was his biggest weakness.

The harder the book got, the more frequently they used words that were unfamiliar to him. Which meant he would constantly be asking me questions on what certain words mean.

But that was fine. I could deal with that.

I was just too proud of his progress to deny him any sort of help.

Halloween was on a Thursday night this year and though I stopped going trick-or-treating when I was sixteen, it still saddened me to think that there was a day of school after Halloween.

But despite the fact that I didn't go trick-or-treating... this was still a problem.

Sunny had heard about some frat house Halloween party that she was dying to go to and wanted me to come along too. "I've been to the one held by these boys last year with my ex and it was amazing!" She said as we walked towards the subway station at which we would part ways to go home.

"It's kind of last minute..."

"I'm sure you've got nothing to do tonight though!" Sunny grinned, "C'mon! It'll be fun."

That was what she said about the clubbing event... the same clubbing event that even she thought ended up being horrible.

"Bring Aurora," she then said. She had seen Aurora a couple times since we first met and the two of them liked each other. Sunny also knew that if Aurora came, I would come for sure.

I thought about it for a second but then nodded, "alright! I'll ask Aurora and text you?"

Sunny looked thrilled, "yes! Meet me there at eight, okay? The Frat house is just down the street, not too far from here but I'll send you the address anyways."

I nodded, "sounds good!"

"And you *have* to dress up! You can't come in without a costume!"

I chuckled, "alright." I know I had an old Halloween costume lying around somewhere.

And then we split up.

I called Aurora when I approached my apartment and told her about what we *could* do that Halloween evening.

But to my surprise, she said no. "I'm so sorry, girl," she started sounding really sad, "you know me... I'm a procrastinator and I have an essay due tomorrow. I completely forgot about it until this morning and just started it right now."

Aurora was doing Paramedicine. She wanted to be a paramedic and the program here at Oakville was not only very hard to get in to, but extremely hard to stay in. It consisted of *a lot* of theory-slash-essay work in the first two years and a lot of practical work in the last two years. So I couldn't blame poor Aurora for refusing me.

"It's alright, Aurora, I understand."

"Why don't you take Atem?" She suddenly asked.

I laughed, "you're kidding, right?"

"No, seriously," she said, "Halloween is like, the *only* the night where he can put on all his Egyptian stuff and feel like himself, no?"

Aurora still wasn't one hundred percent sure on whether she believed this whole Egyptian Pharaoh thing, but she sure did act like she did. In fact, I couldn't tell at all whether she was being sarcastic or not.

But... I heard her loud and clear. And that was a brilliant idea.

"You're a genius, Ro."

I could imagine her grinning, "I know. Now pray that my genius is seen by the dumb-ass Teaching Assistant that's gonna mark this goddamn essay."

I laughed, "alright, I'll let you know how the party goes."

"Sounds great. Have fun," she started, "but stay close to Atem. Frat boys are usually horny as fuck and I don't want you to get hurt."

I forgot about the fact that a Halloween party at a Fraternity would have Frat boys. But I didn't think much of it. Since the time Atem saved me from Victor

and the Red Eyed man, I felt really safe around him.

He would keep me safe.

When I got home, I rushed into the living room with a big grin on my face,
"Tem! I have a surprise for you!"

The look on his face when he looked up from the book he was reading clearly screamed that he did *not* like the new variation to his nickname that I just blurted out. But he seemed too curious about the surprise to say anything about it.
"What?"

"We're going to a party!"

One of his eyebrows rose very high up onto his forehead, "a party?"

"Mhmm!" I said as I walked off into my room.

When I returned, I was holding the plastic bag in which all of his jewelry, the skirt, the hat and the shoes he was wearing when I first met him were.

He recognized the bag immediately and looked like he was giving me all of his attention.

"And at this party, you get to wear these!" I had already explained to him what Halloween was. So I could see that he didn't really need to ask why I would let him wear it all now but not on any other day.

So he stood up, a small smile on his face, "really?"

I nodded as I walked over to him and handed him the bag, "get ready, we're leaving in an hour and a half. You can use my eyeliner if you want."

His smile grew slightly, revealing the smile of his that I really liked to see. But without saying another word, he vanished into his bedroom.

As always, to my dismay, Neferkiti chose to follow him instead of me.

When I went into my room to get ready as well, I had to dig through my closet to find an old costume of mine. When I found it, I looked at it and smiled. It still

looked awesome.

And if I could get Atem to do my eyeliner, I would look exactly the way I want to look.

So within a matter of minutes, I was in the costume. Of course, makeup always took about twenty minutes for me, so I did my makeup to the best of my ability before leaving my room.

When I walked out, I saw Atem standing in front of the tall mirror near the front door examining himself in the outfit that was probably very familiar to him.

Though he wasn't smiling or anything like that, he looked happy.

And though I've seen him in this exact outfit before... something about the way he looked today was different.

He was wearing the white knee length skirt that had this gold sash around his waist, which I hadn't really noticed before.

In terms of jewelry, he had returned his large earrings to his earlobes and also the thick, gold collar was around his neck. There were also gold cuffs that he wore around his calves and also around his upper and lower arms. His sandals were also gold... but whether or not they were real gold, I had no idea.

He had no shirt, revealing his very toned body, which I knew, was going to get some attention at the party. For some reason... that thought made me feel weird.

He was holding his hat in his hands, the hat which my uncle said was actually a crown. The double crown of upper and lower Egypt, he said it was.

He also mentioned to me that though it is depicted on almost every form of ancient artwork that shows a Pharaoh, an actual crown had never been found.

So he was quite excited when I showed it to him.

When Atem noticed me, he held one hand out as he held his crown with the other, "I need your eyeliner."

I smiled before I handed it to him and he drew his eyeliner on without a

problem.

Then, he put on his crown and within seconds, he looked like the man I saw many months ago. Except minus the beard which I forced him to shave off.

And minus the scary look on his face.

When he turned to face me, he looked me up and down and then crossed his arms, "and what are you dressed as?"

I scoffed.

Seriously, he couldn't tell?

"An Egyptian Queen!"

Both his eyebrows rose and then he let out a shocked huff, "you think our women dressed like this?"

It was a costume that I had bought two years ago and the label literally said "Egyptian Queen."

So I was shocked by his reaction.

It was a black dress that fell just above my knees and a gold belt, a fabric, gold collar and fake gold upper armbands. I was even wearing gold heels to match the outfit.

And what I thought would make it obvious was the beaded headdress that I was wearing. It had a fabric snake on it and everything.

I placed my hands on my hips, "then how *do* they dress?"

"Well first of all," he reached out and touched the fabric, "this fabric is ridiculously thick. Our women wore cloths that were often see-through." He then reached down and tugged at my skirt, "and this is too short for a Queen. Higher classed Egyptian women wear long dresses. Only lower classed women wear skirts because long dresses would get in the way of their labor work."

I rolled my eyes.

"And the shoes," He scoffed, "those would sink into the ground where I come from. And why is it black—"

"Okay, I *get it!*" I sighed, "my costume isn't great, fine!" I'm sure Atem was the only one who would think that, though.

He opened his mouth to probably diss me some more but I cut him off, "please do my eyeliner."

And now he rolled his eyes like he always did when I asked him to do it for me.

But he still did it.

I was kind of getting better at it myself, since for school days and stuff like that I tried it on my own. But for special events like parties and what not, I always asked Atem... since he was so good at it.

When he was done, I looked in the mirror and smiled. It was perfect. But then I looked at him again and pointed at my left eye, "can you also put the little lines?"

He gave me a confused look until I used my fingers to draw it with imaginary lines, "the Eye of Horus?"

I nodded, "yes!"

"Why?"

"Your people don't put that on your face?"

"No."

"Well, we think you do, so can you please do it to make my costume look better?"

He rolled his eyes and shook his head, "your people are ridiculous and ignorant."

Maybe they were.

Actually, they were. Period.

But right now that didn't matter. What did matter was that the Pharaoh standing in front of me was the master of eyeliner and I swear when he was done I wanted to hug him.

I had never seen a more beautiful Eye of Horus. Not even on Google.

And though he didn't like my representation of "his women," as he called them, when the time came for us to leave, we were off.

Who needed a map when I could hear the party from five minutes away?

Plus, all I needed to do was follow the groups of people who looked like they had already gotten drunk before even arriving and voila, we had arrived.

I had come to learn that Atem *hated* loud noises. So the booming music coming from the large, rather lovely looking, frat house did not seem to be doing it for him.

"Is this what parties are usually like with your people?"

I sighed, "well, for people that are around my age, yes."

He shook his head, "will there at least be some sort of alcohol?"

"Yeah," I said, "but I can't drink, I'm still eighteen."

He looked at me, "so?"

"In our country, you're only allowed to drink alcoholic beverages after you turn nineteen."

He scoffed, "pathetic!" He gestured to some of the drunk guys running around looking like idiots, "no wonder they can't hold their alcohol properly."

I allowed myself to laugh at that.

When we arrived at the frat house, I looked for Sunny who told me to find her when we got there.

It was a large place... it almost looked kind of like a small mansion. But it was *crowded* with people and though I couldn't hear Atem at all because of the booming music, I knew he was complaining as he followed me through the crowd.

But when I spotted Sunny, who was standing with some random boy, I started to wave like a crazy person, startling Atem.

Sunny noticed me instantly and grinned when she saw me. She excused herself from the stranger and then rushed over to me, "hey! So glad you—"

She cut herself off when she saw Atem, who was examining her in her very short, very revealing pirate costume. "Why, hello there!" Sunny smiled at him before she looked at me, "you never told me your friend was super hot!"

I let out a short, shocked laugh.

"You two aren't dating right?"

I shook my head quickly, "no way!"

"Good!" She started to beam as she looked back at him and held her hand out, "I'm Sunny!"

Atem looked at her hand and then took it in his. I had taught him how to shake hands, "I am... Atem." He responded.

And in a matter of seconds, Sunny was trying to become best friends with Atem.

Honestly, it was pure flirting. I mean, she was complementing his abs. Obviously that's flirting. She was flirting with him one hundred percent and all of a sudden I felt like a third wheel on an awkward date.

To be honest, I didn't know if Atem even understood that she was flirting with him. He did seem to be enjoying the conversation as I could tell by the smirk on his face... but I mean, flirting in Ancient Egypt *must* have been completely different from flirting now, right?

But whatever the case, a long time passed as the two spoke to each other and something inside me was boiling. I wanted the flirting to stop.

"Hey, Sunny," I started.

She didn't seem to hear me.

"Sunny!"

Sunny looked at me, "yeah?"

"I really want some water... could you come with me to get some?"

She pointed at a long table that seemed to look like a bar, "you can get it over there, it's one-fifty per bottle."

Then the flirting continued.

I gulped back my annoyance before getting up and walking off, deciding that I'd rather go on my own than sit here awkwardly for any longer.

When I got to the table, I noticed that it was actually an actual bar. There were a ton of alcohol bottles sitting on a shelf behind the table and there were even those little hose thingies.

In a frat house.

Wow.

The University allowed this?

The cute bar tender behind the table smiled at me, "what can I get you?"

I was about to say a bottle of water but someone cut me off, "one vodka shot. On me."

When I turned and looked to my right, I saw a dark haired, rather cute looking guy standing next to me.

It took me a second to realize that he was getting the drink for me, "oh... no, I can't drink. I'm eighteen." I said, quickly.

He tilted his head slightly, "and you're cute," he said before he chuckled and looked over at the bar tender who was about to pour some vodka into a tiny glass, "nevermind. Let me buy this cute little lady the cutest margarita you have to offer."

I hesitated, "no... it's fine—"

"C'mon, cut me some slack," he grinned and leaned against the counter, "I'm trying to be cool."

I chuckled at that, "Thanks, but... um, aren't margarita's alcoholic?" I didn't know much about alcohol... but the term margarita definitely sounded alcoholic. Pretty, but alcoholic.

He shook his head, "nah," he simply said.

And when the bar tender handed me the lovely pink drink with a lime slice and sugar all over the rim of the glass, I found myself smiling.

Okay fine.

I was going to allow myself to let this guy buy me a drink.

Why not?

Atem seemed to be having a good time, why shouldn't I?

"Like it?"

I took a sip, tasting the sugar and some sourness on my tongue, but when I looked back at the cute boy, I smiled. "It tastes great!"

He smiled, "I'm Finn, what's your name?"

"May," I said.

"Your costume is lovely, Pharaoh-ess. Is that what they call them?"

I laughed, at least *he* knew I was an Egyptian Queen, "no, they just call them Pharaoh's, I think." That's what they called Hatshepsut, right? The Female Pharaoh?

He chuckled, "alright, Pharaoh, so you're a first-year?"

I nodded.

"Cool, I'm graduating this summer."

Oh la la... a much older guy. "What's your program?"

"Life science. Planning on becoming a doctor."

Oh la la... a doctor. "Cool!" That *was* cool.

"What about you?"

"Evolutionary Biology and Anthropology."

"Wow, they say Anthropologists are the students that always get laid."

The vulgar comment caught me off guard, so I chuckled awkwardly.

We talked for some time, and in that time he had managed to buy me four margarita's though I refused each one.

Four.

But they were so tasty.

And I couldn't help but think that he was super sweet.

However, I knew that I had been cruelly tricked when I started to hear the buzzing.

I wasn't dizzy or anything. At least, I think I wasn't.

But I felt all weird and fuzzy and I didn't like it.

The guy seemed like a cool guy until I realized that he may have been trying to get me drunk.

I didn't want to make it obvious that I had figured it out, worried about what he was planning when I was thoroughly drunk.

So I just stepped back and smiled, "I need to go to the bathroom," I lied, "Give me a second, I'll be right back."

"Need some help?" He asked, grinning.

I shook my head, "I know where it is."

And before he could say anything, I started to walk away.

To my surprise, Atem and Sunny were *still* talking. Well, Sunny was talking and Atem was leaning back against a wall staring at her with a straight face.

I kind of barged into their conversation, grabbing a hold of Atem's arm and surprising him.

"What?" He asked, looking down at me.

Sunny looked at me strangely, "you okay?"

I tightened my grip on Atem's arm, practically hugging it as my head spun. And when I turned around I saw that the guy I was talking to was not too far away from me *and* he looked disappointed.

Atem followed my gaze but clearly didn't catch on, "what's wrong with you?"

"Let's go home," I said, "I don't feel well."

He knelt down slightly to look straight at my face, "what?"

"Bye Sunny, I'll text you in the morning," I said as I tugged at Atem's arm.

Sunny started to protest but my brain chose to filter it out. Instead, I focused on trying to find the exit.

When we made it outside, I was still holding onto Atem's arm.

Every second that passed by made me feel more and more dizzy and god was I pissed.

The one time a guy flirts with me, he turns out to be a douche who tricks me into drinking.

But then I paused.

Nah-uh. Not good.

It was illegal for me to drink.

I had just committed an illegal act.

I let go of the still confused Atem's arm and rubbed my face with my hands.

Oh man.

Oh man. Oh man. Oh man.

I was a criminal.

Suddenly, I felt Atem's hand on my shoulder, "what are you doing?"

I stumbled over a crack in the sidewalk and since I was wearing heels, it took me a second to get a hold of myself.

"Are you... drunk?"

"I don't know," I mumbled, staring at the floor so I don't trip again.

"I thought you said you can not drink?"

"I can't," just as I said it, I stumbled over something again, but managed to stop myself from falling down. Again.

"Then why are you drunk?"

"Some guy... just gave me some alcohol. I didn't know."

"How can you *not* know the taste of alcohol?"

I looked at Atem with an overly ferocious, exaggerated glare, "I've never tasted it before!"

"It has a distinct taste."

"Are you going to accuse me of committing a crime?" I hissed. I didn't know I was drinking alcohol. It's not my fault I was so innocent? I couldn't get arrested since I didn't know, right?

He wasn't affected by my glare or my hiss. Instead, he snorted, "you are such a hopeless fool."

I kept glaring at him as we walked, "and you're a fucking asshole."

I froze.

Okay.

I was drunk.

I just swore at him.

Oh my god.

I slapped my hand over my mouth and gasped as I watched him stare at me with an eyebrow raised, "I'm sooooooooo sorry!"

He stared at me for another moment before he shook his head and continued walking.

"Atem!" I called as I caught up to him, "I'm sooooooooo sorry!"

He sighed, "whatever."

"I don't even know why I bother," I frowned, "why are guys such *jerks*?" I kicked a random beer can down the street and while I did it, I almost tripped and fell. But Atem grabbed my arm tightly, holding me firmly.

"Oh Ra, why are you so weak?"

I chuckled, "did you just say Oh Ra?" Then I laughed, "you are sooooo Egyptian."

The glare on his face softened slightly as he blinked slowly in annoyance and then kept walking, still holding my arm so I probably wouldn't fall again.

"But seriously though, why are guys such jerks? I mean, I told him I wouldn't drink but he still tricked me into drinking! Like, if he wanted me to have sex with him he could have asked—" Atem looked at me in shock, "—of course, I would have said no to that too but still, that's probably why he got me drunk, right? To trick me into getting into bed with him? That's what happens in the movies after all—"

"Shut up."

I ignored him, "he goes to my school, oh my god, I might see him again, eww," I started glaring, "I'll give him a good slap across his face... but maybe not cause I've never slapped someone in my entire life so I don't want to waste my first slap on someone as useless as Phil. Or Finn... what was his name? Whatever, he's a fucking asshole—" I cut myself off again and slapped my hand over my face, "—oh my god I keep swearing—"

"God, woman, silence yourself."

I turned my head and looked at him, my ferocious glare returning to my face, "stop telling me to shut up, asshole," I said, swearing again and pulling my arm away from him, "I'm like your mom, you know, since I take care of you and teach you English!"

He stopped walking and looked at me.

I turned to face him, still glaring, "seriously, I must be a saint to be this nice to you. All you men are *jerks* but here I am, being so—"

Before I even knew it, Atem's reached out and put his hand on my cheek.

"Stop," he said, "stop glaring like that."

Despite being angry... and sad... and god knows what I was in that drunken state... my heart still managed to suddenly start racing.

"That look doesn't suit you. You look better when you smile."

And before I could even blink, he suddenly pushed my face back, making me stumble, before continuing to walk.

I swallowed and tried to process the cheek touch. I touched my cheek awkwardly, swallowing again and then taking a deep breath.

His hand was so warm.

And for some reason I imagined that they would be cold. Very cold.

I shook my head, took another breath and called out to him, "wait!"

He turned around to look at me and obviously I tripped again.

Atem groaned, "you are such a nuisance," he mumbled, "we would be home already if you weren't so careless." And then he grabbed my arms and pulled me behind him.

I scoffed as he somehow managed to get me onto his back without my help whatsoever and suddenly I was on his back.

I fought for a second, embarrassed by the fact that I was, one, riding on the back of a man in a Pharaoh costume, two, having to deal with my skirt riding up while he held onto my bare legs, and three, touching the bare upper body of a very attractive man.

But then he yelled at me and told me to stop and so I stopped.

And I wrapped my arms around his neck and let him carry me.

"You don't need to carry me," I said, "I'm not hurt."

"No, but you are drunk and slow and I want to hurry up and get home so I can sleep. So just be quiet and tell me where I'm supposed to turn to get back to your place."

I frowned and rested my chin on his bare shoulder, scrunching my face up in annoyance.

But then I remembered him telling me I looked better when I smiled so I relaxed and calmed down before I sighed.

When I took a deep breath, I inhaled his scent and calmed even more.

Atem smelled like... a man.

I mean, what else would he smell like, right?

But... he smelled like what I imagined a man to smell like.

Kind of sweaty, but not a bad sweaty.

It was a nice kind of sweaty.

And at the same time, there was also something sweet about his scent.

Sweet and sweaty.

That didn't sound very nice, did it?

But it did smell nice.

Nice enough for me to continue to inhale that comforting scent as we made our way home.

It was while I was awkwardly sniffing this man that I realized that this was the closest I had ever been to him.

"I'm sorry I swore at you," I suddenly said.

He let out a small laugh, "trust me, I was not offended at all."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Okay good."

"Is this really the first time you have gotten drunk?"

I nodded.

"When you get home, drink a lot of water. If you forget to do so then you will have a horrid headache in the morning."

I nodded again, "yes sir."

He let out a small laugh.

"You know," I started, "you may be an evil Pharaoh but you're pretty cool when you aren't being a jerk. I mean, since you're carrying me and all... that's really nice of you."

"You're welcome."

I pouted, "I didn't say thank you."

"Well, I'm sure a thank you was coming soon."

"It wasn't," I said, "I was going to say that I wouldn't mind you being one of my best friend so long as you keep up the good work."

"I appreciate your kindness, my lady, but I don't think I deserve such an honor."

I knew he was being sarcastic and I could tell he was smiling, but I started to grin, "my lady? Ha!" I laughed, throwing my head back, "I kind of like that!"

He was definitely smiling.

Too bad I couldn't see that nice smile properly.

"Let me sleep on it," I said, "I'll go home and sleep and then decide whether or not you are worthy of joining the May Bestie Club."

"Fine," he simply said.

"I kind of want to dance though—"

"Please don't."

I laughed loudly.

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 12 - [Beauty and the First Snowfall]

At some point on our way home I had fallen asleep. Thankfully, I fell asleep after we got to somewhere that Atem could recognize and we made it home.

But when I woke up the next morning, not only was I still in my costume but my makeup had come off all onto my pillow and I had a massive headache.

My heels were off though, and so was my headdress.

I remembered Atem trying to wake me up when we got home to get me to drink the water, but I whined and refused and the glass was still on my side table. Filled to the top.

Well, he *did* warn me about the headache.

I grabbed the glass, spilling some of it and gulped all what was left down.

And then I got up, stripped out of the rough fabric of, what I knew now to be, the rather inaccurate representation of an Egyptian Queen and put on a robe. When I looked at the time, to was already noon.

I had missed my first class and I was late for my second. Great.

After freshening up in the washroom and changing into a pair of jeans and a random grey shirt, I walked into the kitchen with my large glasses on, no makeup and my hair still a mess.

To my surprise, there was a bowl of Honey Nut Cheerios sitting there for me on the island in the kitchen along with another glass of water.

When I looked up, I saw Atem lying down on the couch, reading yet another book, ignoring me.

"Morning," I said, though it wasn't exactly morning anymore.

Atem nodded his head but didn't look away from his book.

I smiled before I ate up my cereal that Atem so kindly prepared for me.

Then I gulped up all the water in the second glass and popped two Advil's into my mouth before saying my goodbyes to Atem so that I could make it to at least one of my three classes that day.

Since I had a headache, the class went by *very* slowly. And when it was finally over, I couldn't just go home yet. I had to make a pit stop at our schools bookstore so I could pick up another, expensive, required textbook for one my classes.

But while I was there I couldn't help myself from stopping at the notebook section.

The university bookstore had just gotten a brand new shipment of lovely, hard covered, old styled notebooks. They looked almost Renaissance period like with a dark red cover that looked so pretty that I just *had* to buy it.

But I didn't just buy one, I bought two.

Because I had a brilliant idea!

When I got home I walked towards Atem and sat down next to him

He was still in the spot that he was in when I left, still reading the book he was reading with the sleeping Neferkiti sprawled over his lap.

At first I thought he was going to ignore me, but he didn't.

The second I sat down, he turned to look at me, "you know," he started, "I've been thinking."

I looked at him and waited for him to continue.

"Your country... your world... it's very cowardly."

"Cowardly?" I thought.

He nodded, "after reading these books and seeing the T.V. shows... that is the conclusion I have come to. Your world is filled with cowards."

I couldn't disagree.

I mean, it was true.

"Before the wizard cursed me, he told me some things," he looked straight ahead, "I would not say that everything he said was right. And the reason I say this is because I have yet to find out... not that he was wrong."

"He sent you here to suffer, right?"

The Pharaoh nodded.

I nodded too.

It was weird to think that. Someone thought that this time was *that* bad? Bad enough to want to send an evil Pharaoh here as a punishment? That was indeed weird.

I mean, life *was* tough, sometimes. But not so bad. Though I knew that there were tons of people out there who had it way worse than I did.

"Well, for the record," I started, "I really do hope that you don't find out that he was right about everything."

Atem let out a short laugh. He then looked at me, "how is your head?"

"My head's fine," I smiled, "though I do hope that I can find a way to kick that douche in the balls."

Atem let out another small laugh, surprisingly understanding what I meant, "or you could ask that best friend of yours to do it. I am sure her kick would hurt a lot more than yours."

I laughed, "yeah, I guess your right. But if Aurora finds out what happened, she will go on a manhunt and will not rest until she's certain he can't have babies anymore."

Atem laughed again, this time a little more wholeheartedly, "she is a noble friend."

I nodded, "she is."

"That's one thing the wizard got wrong," Atem suddenly said.

"Hmm?"

"The wizard said that true friendship is rare here... but most of your friends seem like good, true friends."

I smiled, "they are."

He nodded.

"And as I promised, I did sleep on it and figure out whether or not you should join my friend club."

He rolled his eyes but still smiled.

"And I say yes. Welcome to the May Bestie club, Akhenatem. You are the first Pharaoh to join."

He rolled his eyes again but chuckled, "what an honor." He was being sarcastic of course, so I laughed, but it was what he said next that made me feel weird inside, "I've never had a friend before."

That surprised me. Could it really be possible that someone could never have had a friend? Or was he still being sarcastic.

But whatever the case may have been, I didn't know what to say to that.

So we were quiet for a moment but then I pulled out one of the pretty notebooks from my bag. "I got you something, friend," I said with a grin.

He looked at me with interest on his face like he often did when I had something for him.

I handed him the notebook and watched as he flipped through it, "a writing book?"

I nodded, "a diary! For you to write down your feelings."

Atem looked at me with a funny look that said 'seriously?'

But I was serious, "not for any therapeutic reasons... just because it's a good way to practice writing."

He considered that and then flipped through the book once more. Then he looked at the matching one that I had. "Are you going to write down your feelings as well?"

I chuckled and then opened mine up, "I already started," I said, showing him my first diary entry. I started it while I was munching on a tiny delicious cheesecake at a café right outside the bookstore.

Don't worry, I brought Atem one too, it was just still in my bag.

He took it from me, "Dear Aunty Maya?" He asked, "you are writing your dead aunt a letter?"

"No, silly," I said, taking it from him, "I just like addressing it to her... I imagine her reading it from wherever she is right now."

"Is that what you're supposed to do with a diary? Write letters to someone?"

I shook my head, "no, but you could if you want. You could pick anyone. Or you can pick no one. It's up to you and it'll be private. Only you can read it."

He nodded again, "alright. As long as it improves my English language skills."

I smiled, "now here's the awesome part of my present." I pulled out the tiny round cheesecake and handed it to him. And unsurprisingly, the sight of the delicious treat put a smile on even this evil Pharaoh's face.

It was literally the next day that the weather started to get colder. I mean, I wasn't surprised or anything. It was November now. But as the days went on, the drop in temperature was quick.

And I most definitely did forget that Atem had never experienced a harsh winter, or fall for that matter, in his life.

Fall passed without many questions from him. He did wonder about the trees changing colours and the slight chill, but he said he's done some traveling before in his lifetime and he's felt the chill and seen the colourful trees.

But there was no way he would have experienced a winter like what we have in my country. As one of the countries of the north, winter get's *really* cold.

And Atem was in for a surprise.

But anyways, as the first week of November passed and the weather got cold, Atem really did *not* want to leave the house at all.

I spent so much money on him though, buying him a thick jacket, winter boots, a scarf, mitts and everything else you could need for the cold weather.

But he still hated leaving the house.

So he was grumpier these days. I barely saw him smiling anymore.

And that sucked, especially since he had such a nice smile.

Myself, on the other hand?

Well, I couldn't be happier. I mean, I didn't really like the cold... but as soon as it started getting cold, what that meant was that Christmas was coming.

And how could you *not* love Christmas?

It was the first day of December when I decided I was going to start putting up the Christmas tree. But obviously it was heavy so I would need Atem's help.

He was lying on the couch, wrapped in a blanket and staring at the T.V., which was playing Spongebob Squarepants.

I placed my hands on my hips as I stood in front of him and looked at him with an annoyed look, "Atem, you're going to have to get used to this... I mean it's just going to keep getting worse until like, February!"

He closed his eyes tightly for a second and then opened them again, still staring at the T.V., "then I will stay indoors until whenever February is."

I scoffed before I rolled my eyes, "don't be silly," I said as I grabbed the blanket and started tugging at it. When that didn't work, I grabbed his hand and pulled as hard as I could, "I need you to go to work—" I gasped at how strong he was, not allowing me to pull him even an inch, "—I need your... quote, unquote rent... so that I won't succumb... to my father's betrayal!" I said, grunting with every pull.

He pulled his hand away, almost making me fall, "leave me alone, woman."

I rolled my eyes, "ugh, I just need your help! We won't even be leaving the building."

Now he looked at me, "I will wear my jacket."

"Oh my goodness, you are such a wuss!"

He scowled at the insult, which he now knew the meaning of, and sat up, obviously not wanting to come off as a wuss. "Fine. I will *not* wear it."

I rolled my eyes but just as I put on my shoes to go up to my brother's storage unit at the top of the building to get his old but perfect Christmas tree, my phone started buzzing.

It was Blake.

"Hello?"

"Hey May!" Blake sounded strangely excited, "I've got great news."

"Yeah?"

"I got a promotion!"

I hesitated, "promotion?"

He chuckled, "yeah. My mom came over to celebrate and told me to invite you over for a dinner. Are you free tonight?"

For no reason whatsoever, my cheeks started to burn up, "yeah! I totally am!"

The Christmas tree could wait.

"Great! Feel free to bring Atem too. The more the merrier. I can pick you up—"

"It's okay! We'll walk," I didn't want to burden him, and his apartment wasn't too far away, "the weather's nice today."

"You sure?"

"Yeah! Don't worry about it."

"Alright, well, my mom said she'll be ready by six, but come on over whenever you're ready."

"We'll be there soon!"

Blake chuckled, "see you soon, lovely."

And my heart skipped a beat.

When I hung up, I turned around and saw Atem looking at me, "Blake?" He questioned.

"How'd you know?"

He raised an eyebrow, "it is very obvious when you're talking to him."

I didn't really understand that, but I shrugged it off, "change of plans, we're going to Blake's house!"

Atem hesitated, "we have to leave the building?"

I opened the closet and tossed his new, black, thick, rather expensive trench coat at him.

I was also wearing my red trench coat that flared out like a skirt and had a belt just around the waist. Not because it was cold, but because I really liked that coat.

The weather really was relatively nice out. I mean, there was a light breeze and a chill but not so much that I needed a scarf or earmuffs or even gloves for that

mater.

Atem, however, had a hat, his thick scarf and he didn't have his mitts but his fists were shoved into his pockets and his shoulders raised high as he tried to keep himself warm.

And did I mention that he looked as grouchy as a grouch could possibly be?

I nudged him, "I was serious, you know?" I started, "the weather is only going to get worse from this point on."

"I want to go home," he said, his voice sounding muffled because of the scarf.

I didn't know if he meant home as in my place or home as in Egypt.

But I had a feeling he meant the hot desserts of Egypt.

I shook my head and sighed.

The poor guy was gonna go through hell.

Except it would be cold.

Like not the hot, fiery hell... you know what I mean?

Nevermind.

When we got to Blake's place, I could see the relief on Atem's face as the door opened and the heat from the heater in his apartment blasted at us.

Blake, like Atem, also preferred heat. Of course, Blake was not as crazy as Atem, but ever since they were kids, my brother and his friends would always make fun of Blake during the winter for being the bundled up loser.

Blake gave us a warm smile and welcomed us in, "thanks for coming."

"Is anyone else coming?" I asked.

"Nah," Blake said, "my mum just wanted to see you and thought this would be a good reason to call you over."

I was a little surprised by that.

Blake's mother and I were not close at all. I talked to her a lot when we were kids, but not so much anymore.

But she *loved* my brother. And since I was Marv's baby sister, I guess it shouldn't be too much of surprise that she would invite me over while Marv was still not in the city.

As Atem and I made our way into the small apartment, I noticed that it was super clean today. I didn't come over often, but when I did, this place was often a mess.

But since his mom was over, she probably cleaned it all up for him.

"This is your home?" Atem asked, looking around.

Blake smiled and nodded, "Yes sir. This is my tiny apartment."

"It *is* tiny," Atem said.

And just as Atem closed his mouth, Blake's mother walked out of the guest room.

"Hi Mrs. Swords!" I grinned.

"Hello sweetie!" She grinned back. Mrs. Swords looked a lot like Blake since she too shared the green eyes. But unlike Blake, who had brown hair, Mrs. Swords was a real life blonde with a couple white hairs. Though she was aging, she was still very pretty, with a smile on her face all the time. And on top of being really pretty, she was super nice. "How have you been?" She walked over to me and gave me a hug.

"Great! Thank you! And you?"

"Very well," she said before she looked at Atem, "Oh... oh is this your boyfriend?"

"No!" I said quickly, "Nope. No he is not."

Blake chuckled, "I feel like you're always asked that when you bring along Atem?" He asked as he put an arm over Atem's shoulder.

To my surprise, Atem didn't seem the slightest bit disturbed by this act of friendliness.

Maybe he was closer to Blake than I thought.

I mean, I thought guys go to the gym to work out... but maybe there's some bonding that goes on too?

But what else could it be? They only see each other when they go to the gym.

I chuckled, "yeah, I actually do get asked that a lot."

Mrs. Swords chuckled, walking over to Atem, "hello, hun. I'm Enrica, Blake's mother."

Atem bowed his head slightly, "it's nice to meet you, Aunty Enrica. My name is Akhenatem. But you can call me Atem."

My eyebrows rose at the respect.

I was thoroughly impressed. In fact, I didn't even know he had it in him.

Aunty?

Wow.

But maybe that was an Egyptian thing. Calling your friend's mom aunty?

Well whatever... Blake's mom seemed flattered by the respect too.

Mrs. Swords cooking was *amazing*. So both Atem and I filled our stomachs happily. After we ate and discussed both Blake's promotion and how university was treating me, Mrs. Swords did the dishes while Blake, Atem and I sat in the living room talking.

"I feel like it's getting too cold too fast," Blake, who was sitting next to me, said, looking bleak.

"I agree," Atem said, "this weather is horrendous."

I rolled my eyes at the two wimps. One was a police officer and the other was a king, and they were complaining about the weather?

And here I was, a measly little schoolgirl, taking it on like a warrior.

Boys, right? Such wimps.

"But think about it this way," I started, trying to make them feel better, "cold weather means Christmas!"

Blake shrugged and nodded his head as he considered that but Atem, who was sitting across from me, looked at me with a blank expression, "what does that mean?"

I had completely forgotten that he had no idea what Christmas was.

But suddenly I got excited. Maybe *this* would make him feel better about the cold.

Blake chuckled, "you don't know what Christmas is? You're kidding?"

Atem looked at Blake and shook his head, "I am not kidding."

Blake's eyebrows rose as he looked at me, "they don't celebrate Christmas in Egypt?"

Like mostly everyone who knew Atem, aside from Ro and Alec, Blake still thought that Atem was the son of a friend of my uncle. From Egypt.

"Well, I think most of Egypt's population are Muslims?"

Blake nodded his head, "Mhmm, good point." He now looked at Atem, "so you're Muslim? If you don't mind me asking."

Atem just stared at Blake.

Of course, it was obvious to me that Atem had no idea what we were talking about.

So I *had* to chime in, "Atem comes from a family that isn't particularly religious—"

"Are you crazy, woman?" Atem suddenly said, "not religious? Ha. My family is extremely religious. My mother spent most of her days praying..."

As he blabbered on about his religious family, I realized that me suggesting he wasn't religious was a stupid idea on my part. I mean, his mother died while she was *praying* for him.

That's religious.

Blake chuckled when Atem finished, "yeah, I get that," he said, referring to some part of Atem's speech that I didn't hear, "I myself am not particularly religious. My mom is crazy religious though, like yours. She's the kind of lady that you always see at church—"

"And I really think you should be coming with me," Mrs. Swords said from the kitchen.

Blake chuckled as he made a funny face at us.

He then put his arm on the back of the sofa, behind me, making my heart skip a beat.

"So why don't you explain Christmas to Atem?" Blake suggested.

"yeah, of course!" I smiled, looking at Atem, "so, Christmas day is the day that Jesus Christ was born—"

"Who?"

"Jesus Christ," I repeated, "like, the main figure of Christianity—"

"What?"

I rolled my eyes, "just listen, Atem."

He didn't say anything to that.

So he listened as I explained what I knew about Christianity, Mrs. Swords

chiming in here and there.

Like Blake, I too didn't find myself to be very religious. I was just someone who acknowledged and understood everything. I loved learning about all religions. So I knew a thing or two about most religions. At least, from what people have told me.

And I guess that was one of the beauties of religion, all the knowledge you could gain from it.

But anyways, after I finished explaining the birth of Christ to the rather confused Atem, I moved on to explain Christmas.

"So nowadays, a lot of cultures, Christian or not, celebrate Christmas as a way to get together with family and friends and share love. So what the tradition is, is that people put up a Christmas tree and we get gifts for our loved ones and exchange them on Christmas morning. But aside from that there's, like, eating with family, parades and a bunch of other things."

Atem narrowed his eyes, "that sounds interesting."

I nodded eagerly, "it's the most beautiful time of the year, you'll see. Houses are lit up with beautiful lights and there's caroling and it's just absolutely perfect!"

"And—" Blake started, but was interrupted by his cellphone ringing, "excuse me," he said before he got up and walked off.

When he returned a minute later, he had a disappointed look on his face. "Gotta go to work."

Mrs. Swords, who was now sitting on the couch next to Atem, frowned, "What?"

"I know, sorry guys."

I smiled, "well, we should be getting home too. It's getting kind of dark."

"It *is* getting dark... I would drop you off, but my partner is coming to pick me up," Blake said, sadly.

I stood up and chuckled, "trust me! It's fine! Atem will protect me."

Blake chuckled and when Atem got up too, he patted Atem's back, "do that for me, won't you?"

Atem nodded his head slowly and my cheeks warmed up.

So with that, we said our goodbyes, thanked Mrs. Swords and Blake for having us and then headed out.

When we walked out of the elevator on the bottom floor, I saw Atem still fidgeting with his scarf.

So I chuckled, "hold on." I said, grabbing his arm.

He stopped and turned to face me.

As I fixed his scarf for him, making sure that he was as warm as possible, I noticed he was staring at my face.

"What?" I asked, as I lifted the scarf over his mouth and nose.

He didn't say anything at first, but then when he spoke up, my eyes widened, "you're in love with Blake, aren't you?" He asked, his voice muffled behind the scarf.

My cheeks burned as I pulled my hands away from him.

What did he just say?

Love Blake?

What?!

And with that, I started walking, "what?!" It came out as a squeak, "that's ridiculous."

He followed closely behind me, "it is obvious, you know?"

"What's obvious?" I opened the door of the building and walked out.

"That you love him. You make it so obvious. Your voice changes, you play with your hair and lick your lips and you start acting more like a woman—"

"More like a woman?" I scoffed, "then what do I act like normally? A man?"

He shrugged, "yes."

I scoffed again and shook my head, "I do not *love* him."

"Well then you are interested in him."

"No!" I turned around and gave Atem the pouty, 'let's stop talking about this,' face.

He rolled his eyes, "well, you probably do not want my advice, but let me just tell you that he's not going to know unless you tell him."

"There's nothing to tell him," I said, crossing my arms.

"Fine," Atem finally said, "whatever you say."

I crossed my arms, walking in front of him with reddened cheeks.

Was it really *that* obvious?

And *in love*? No way! I mean, yeah, I had a *tiny* crush on him! But I wasn't in love with him!

Oh my gosh... that's so embarrassing!

But if what Atem said was right... then at least Blake didn't know, right?

I guess that was good.

I heard Atem groan and when I turned and looked at him, I saw him pulling his hat down over his ears.

Deciding to try and forget what had just happened, I smiled and chuckled, "loser."

He looked over at me with annoyed eyes, but didn't say anything.

The streets were rather quiet since it was in fact pretty late out. The moon was out and shining brightly though it was hidden behind some clouds.

And since there was no sun to keep us warm, it was considerably chillier than it was earlier when we were walking to Blake's house.

So I was kind of cold.

When I placed my hands over my cold ears to warm them up a bit, I noticed that some people were outside decorating their homes.

Since Blake's home was in the more residential area of downtown, there were more houses around here compared to where I lived.

I walked slower so Atem could catch up to me, "those are the lights I was talking about," I said, pointing at one family that was putting up lights.

Atem watched them carefully, "how will you put up lights when you live so high up in the air?"

I smiled, "well, I can put up lights on the balcony, like that," I pointed at someone who was standing on their balcony high up in their apartment, putting lights up on their railing.

"I see," Atem said.

I pulled my hair over my ears. One of the benefits of having such thick hair was that it was great at keeping my ears and neck warm.

And just as returned my hands to my pocket, I was surprised by a cold drop of something on my cheek.

Snow.

It was the first snowfall of the year.

I stopped walking.

When I turned around to look at Atem, I noticed that he too had stopped walking a moment before I did.

He was staring up at the sky, as most people who were outside now were doing.

I started to grin as I walked over to him.

As every second passed, more and more snow started to fall. And in moments, the sky was sprinkling out beautiful fluffy white snowflakes.

"What is this?" He asked softly, as he held his hand out and caught a couple snowflakes in his hand. They melted instantly, "rain?"

"Snow!" I giggled.

"Snow?"

"You've never seen snow before, right?"

"I've heard of it..." He said, "but never experienced it."

Experienced it, huh?

I laughed.

But as I watched him stare at the falling snow with absolute wonder on his face... something felt strange inside me.

That curiosity on his face... and that pure awe at the sight of something that we really care nothing about... something about it all made him look so *handsome*.

Maybe it was the small smile on his face.

Or the wide eyes and parted lips.

Whatever it was... Akhenatem looked so handsome in the falling snow.

"This is..." he started as he looked at me, "magic?"

I chuckled as I linked my arm with his, "not magic, it's science. But we can pretend it's magic."

Atem surprisingly didn't pull his arm away, "I'd rather that than one of those long explanation that you seem to always have for *everything*."

I laughed and started walking, pulling him with me, "c'mon, let's go home and have a nice warm cup of hot chocolate. This is the perfect time for that."

Though he's never tasted hot chocolate before, he didn't ask me what it was at all.

And for some reason that made me happy.

It made me feel like he trusted me.

The next day, Atem helped me bring down the Christmas tree from my brother's storage unit at the top floor of his building. It was old and had been left unused for a while but it was a Christmas tree nonetheless.

He even came out with me to buy some ornaments, since most of my brother's were either broken or ugly.

Atem didn't complain much about the weather today. Maybe because it was still snowing, and he seemed to really like the snow.

And when the Christmas tree was done, I was thoroughly satisfied, it was beautiful.

I smiled as I looked at our masterpiece. "Isn't it beautiful?"

Atem, who was standing next to me, shrugged, "it's a tree. With decorations."

I elbowed him but laughed at his lack of enthusiasm. "Anyways, I'm too lazy to actually cook, so lets go out to some restaurant. Want sushi?"

Atem really liked sushi, so he nodded.

We got ready and left Neferkiti to play with the ornaments on the Christmas tree. I trusted her to not make a mess of things... Neferkiti was too elegant of a cat to make a mess of things.

And then we went out for lunch-slash-dinner, since it was four... too late for lunch but too early for dinner.

As all winter days, it got darker a lot earlier, so though it wasn't that late when we left the restaurant, it was already starting to get dark.

But it was the way it looked out right now that reminded me of the night before.

When Atem told me that it was obvious I liked Blake.

I took a deep breath and looked at Atem, who was walking beside me, "is it *actually* obvious that I like Blake?"

"Yes."

"Really?"

"Yes. Really."

"You think he knows?"

Atem hesitated, "well, no. The fool seems oblivious."

I let out a sigh of relief, "oh, thank goodness."

The Pharaoh raised an eyebrow, "thank goodness?"

"If he knew... oh gosh—"

"Is it not the point that he knows about your interest in him?"

"No," I said quickly, "he can't know!"

Atem gave me a look of disbelief, "that makes absolutely no sense."

"Why not?"

"What is the point of liking someone if they are not supposed to know?" He asked, his voice getting more muffled as he covered his mouth more with his scarf, "if you ask me, it is a waste of time to be a part of one sided love. Why waste the effort if they do not like you back?"

"It's called a crush," I said, frowning.

Though I had to admit, those were the wisest words I've ever heard come out of his mouth.

It *is* really a waste of time to just *like* someone...

He was right. What's the point of liking someone if they're not supposed to know?

I had never thought about it that way.

"What do you mean crush?" He asked.

I guess they didn't really use that term in Egypt, "like, when you kinda sorta like someone but not really."

He narrowed his eyes, "an infatuation?"

"I guess you can call it that."

"Still a waste of time, if you ask me."

"Everything's a waste of time to you," I muttered. But then I sighed, "so, as a guy... what do you think is the best thing to do?"

"Tell him." He said, firmly, "it is as simple as that."

"But how?"

"Just go to him and tell him you love him."

"That's not how it works here!" I cringed at the awkwardness of such a conversation. Blake would think I'm crazy.

"Then enlighten me. How *does* it work here?"

"You take it slow. You start dating first and when you're ready, you say 'I love you.' Starting off with I love you is weird."

"Your people are crazy," he said, "they have no idea of how this sort of thing is supposed to work."

"Says the evil Pharaoh."

Atem rolled his eyes, "just because I am an evil pharaoh does not mean I am a

fool."

I sighed, "have you ever even been in love before?"

He snorted, "not in love. But I will be honest and say that I have had an infatuation before as a child."

I was shocked, "really?"

He nodded, "though it didn't last. And she was killed later."

Now I hesitated, "please tell me you weren't the one that killed her."

"I do not kill people," he said, "I order the killing and people do it for me."

I scoffed, "you're trying to give me advice when you had your crush killed?!" I half yelled, "why? Cause she didn't like you back?"

"Her death had nothing to do with my infatuation. She got herself caught up with something she should have gotten caught up with," he said, "She was punished the same way everyone else who was involved was punished."

"So? Why did you have them all killed?"

"That is none of your business," he looked away.

I really wanted to know.

Maybe this girl had something to do with why he turned evil?

It would be like a movie... she betrayed him and he was so devastated that he turned horrible.

Could it be something like that?

But unsurprisingly, he wouldn't tell me. And I was too afraid to ask.

We were doing so well these days... I didn't want to piss him off and throw us back to the beginning where he hated me.

Though, being the normal human being I was... the reminder that this man was

someone who killed people before was kind of chilling.

"Here... no matter who you are... a King or a normal person... killing is a crime," I said.

"It is a crime back in Egypt too," he simply said, "it was especially against our teachings for a *Pharaoh* to kill. Unless we are fighting in a war."

"Then why'd you do it?" I asked, bravely.

Atem scowled and looked straight ahead.

He didn't answer me.

"Did something bad happen... in your past, maybe? Something that made you angry—"

"Go tell Blake about your feelings," Atem suddenly said, "worry about yourself. Not about me."

I bit my lip and then let out a breath, "yeah... alright."

Despite me not getting anywhere in this conversation... I had to say that this was the most he's ever told me about his past.

So maybe that was something.

Maybe... as time goes by, he'll tell me.

He'll tell me why he did what he did.

But until then, I guess I *should* focus on myself.

And I guess I *will* go ahead and tell Blake that I've got a crush on him.

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 13 - [Beauty and the Bad Date]

Hey guys!

Sorry about the delay in the update! I've been working all week! XD

I also wanted to let all my "The Prince and his Slave" readers know that I'm planning on rewriting the story! I wrote that version when I was in Grade 8 or something... which means that was a little under ten years ago (OMG) And I feel like rewriting it would be good so that it could be a lot better now that I've had time to grow as a writer (haha!)

For those of you who have read the story, please let me know what you'd think about a rewritten version!! A rewritten version would mean generally the same plot, just making it a little more historically accurate and also maybe more interesting with romance, better character personalities, taking out unnecessary stuff and adding in necessary details, etc!

But yeah, let me know what you think! Of course, the old one will always still be on here! So nothings going to happen to that! Haha!

Thanks for reading guys! And please don't forget to vote and comment if you liked the chapter!

Enjoy!! =D

-Luckycharms!! <3



As Atem had suggested, I was going to tell Blake that I liked him. Of course, I knew it was *not* going to be easy. I mean, I was hell-a scared and literally felt like I was going to pee my pants, as I got ready to go see him.

I called Blake the next morning and asked him if he was free to come shopping with me that afternoon. He was thinking that I was in need of help to pick out a Christmas gift for my brother.

Of course, he said yes to coming. That was the thing about Blake, even if he was busy, he was always willing to make some time to help me out.

I was ready pretty early, so I sat on the couch next to across from Atem with a probably horrified look on my face.

Obviously, that horrified look was obvious because suddenly Atem groaned and rolled his eyes. "You look like you are about to run alone into the middle of a battlefield with no armor, no weapons and no training."

I chuckled at the comparison but frowned, "well what do you expect? I've never done anything like this before!"

"But if you do not take a deep breath and gain some confidence, you will *not* be quite appealing."

"What?"

"Blake seems to like women who are confident."

I narrowed my eyes, "and how do *you* know that?"

"I spend more time with him than you do, as you know very well."

"So?"

"He *is* an attractive man. I have seen girls approach him before and the only ones that ever seem to pique his interest are the very confident ones."

Well.

That didn't exactly make me feel better.

He seemed to see that he wasn't doing a good job at calming me down. "Just go to him and give it to him straight. If he rejects you, that is his loss."

Well, that kind of worked, cause now I was smiling, "you really think that him rejecting me would be his loss?"

Atem suddenly started to reconsider his words, realizing what he said. And when he figured it out he just looked away.

But I kept smiling, "fine. I can do this. I'll tell him I like him. The best thing that can happen is that he feels the same way. The worst thing that can happen is that he rejects me."

"And if he rejects you," Atem continued, "at least you know now and can move on with your life."

I nodded, "true."

Atem looked back at me and then for whatever reason, shook his head.

"Well, I guess I should get going now," I said, looking down at my watch.

But just as I was getting up to leave, I remembered something.

I ran back into my room, grabbed my liquid eyeliner and ran back out. When I handed the eyeliner to Akhenatem, he unsurprisingly let out an annoyed huff.

But as always, without a word he did my eye makeup for me.

"Thanks," I grinned before I returned the eyeliner to my room and walked towards the door.

After putting on my somewhat heeled boots, I turned to Atem, who joined me at the door. "How do I look?"

Atem scoffed and rolled his eyes. "Like a fluffy, angry monkey," he said, referring to my puffy scarf. I didn't know what the hell he meant by monkey though.

So I punched his arm.

"You look fine. Just go."

I smiled and knelt down to pet Neferkiti who was meowing her 'good luck' to me.

And just as I stepped out, Atem surprised me by patting my shoulder, "good luck."

I smiled at him, "thanks Tem."

"Don't call me that."

I laughed before he shut the door in my face.

The mall I was going to was not too far from my brother's apartment. In fact, it was only about a fifteen-minute walk and since the weather wasn't too bad today, it was a nice walk.

Though Atem had made me feel better at the apartment... the second I left I was nervous all over again.

I knew very well that I wasn't confident. I had never been the confident type.

I mean, I had an on again off again crush on Blake for a *long* time now. Since I was a kid, to be exact. He was always so nice to me, unlike the rest of my brother's friends.

Aurora, like Atem, has been trying to get me to tell him too... except she's been trying to get me to tell him since we were kids!

I sighed loudly as I thought of what could possibly happen later today.

If he *does* reject me... that would mean that all the year's we've been friends could go to waste.

I mean, it would be awkward to be friends with him if he rejected me... right?

And oh my goodness... if my brother found out that I had been rejected... that would be even worse.

I mean, he wouldn't be mad at Blake or anything... he'd make fun of *me*. For the rest of my life.

I shivered.

Not from the cold, but from the thought of how awkward this could become.

And now I was second-guessing myself.

I sighed out loud again and scratched my head, *I can do this*. I said to myself. *I can—*

"May?"

I looked up when I heard the familiar voice, and to my surprise, I saw Dom walking towards me with a small smile on his face.

My eyes widened, "Dom!"

I hadn't seen him since prom night, where I ran off when he asked me to dance, thanks to Atem.

"How have you been?" He asked as he caught me in a hug.

I hugged him back, though this was weird.

I had known Dom for a long time and this was really the first time when there was a long period where I hadn't seen him in a while.

And... he looked a lot different.

He was dressed kinda nicely, compared to how he usually dresses, and even looked somewhat healthy... considering the fact that he was part of the bad boys who did drugs and stuff.

"I'm fine, thank you... and you? You look... good!"

Dom chuckled, "a lot's gone down since school finished."

"Yeah?"

"I'm trying to find a job, for starters."

"Really?" I was so certain that he didn't have the grades to graduate high school though... did that mean he dropped out? Or maybe it was a summer job?

"Yeah. Trying to pick myself back up. I guess when all my friends graduated and I didn't... life really hit me."

I chuckled, "well, good for you, Dom. I'm proud of you."

He smiled, "well, what about you? It's been so long."

"I know, right." I chuckled, "I've missed you."

He grinned, "I heard you're dating?"

I hesitated, "what?"

"Some dark skinned guy?"

Atem? I laughed, "oh no, no! I'm not dating him. He's just a friend."

"Oh. So you're not dating?"

"Well... no." Not yet, technically.

"Really?" He sounded genuinely shocked.

"Yeah, Dom."

"Okay great... well," he put a hand behind his head and shrugged, "if you're free... wanna go out on a date? With me?"

I blinked.

What? "What?"

He chuckled, "well, we haven't seen each other in a while. Dinner would be nice, no?"

My eyebrows were probably really high up on my face.

Dom... was asking me out on a date?

After all this time?

"It'll be fun, you know," he kept going, "just dinner, or something."

Okay so... Dom wasn't exactly the most awesome guy in the world. And I wasn't exactly interested in him... but... why not... you know?

I haven't seen him in a while. It would be nice to catch up, right? "Um... okay, I guess," I responded awkwardly.

He looked surprised, "seriously?"

"Yeah, why not?" I guess it wouldn't be a problem... "Just dinner, right"

"Yeah," he started grinning, "how's tomorrow night sound?"

"I'm free tomorrow night."

"You have the same number right?"

"Mhmm," I smiled.

"Well, great then. I'll text you tonight and tell you where."

"Sounds good."

He let out a small laugh, "I'll see you tomorrow then."

And with that, we awkwardly parted ways.

Yeah.

It was as awkward as it sounded.

Plus, despite everything Atem told me... when I met up with Blake a little while after, I didn't end up having the guts to ask him out.

And I guess... deep down, I thought it was weird to ask someone out on a date when I had a date with another guy the day after.

When I got home that night, I was surprised by Atem who walked rather quickly to the door.

When I just smiled at him, he rolled his eyes, "so?" He asked, "how did it go?"

I knew he was talking about me asking Blake out, so I sighed and shrugged, "well, I got a date."

He narrowed his eyes, "is that not a good thing? I thought you would be rather ecstatic."

"The date's not with Blake."

He blinked, looking confused.

I walked towards the kitchen and sighed again, "I ran into a friend who I haven't seen in months. And he kind of asked me out on a date."

Atem's eyes became smaller, "wait, and you said yes?"

"I did."

"Why?"

I shrugged, "why not? It's just a date, right? We're going to eat dinner and talk, that's all."

"But I thought you said you ask people you are infatuated with to a date?"

"It doesn't have to be serious..." I said, opening the fridge and pulling out some fruit juice, "and besides, I had a crush on this guy when I was younger."

Atem scoffed as he watched me, "that sounds pathetic."

I looked at him, "what do you mean?"

"Do you fall for a different boy every day?"

I put my hands on my hips, "excuse me? I'm not falling for Dom. I just said yes to dinner."

Atem shook his head in disappointment, "clearly your interest for Blake must never have been serious for you to jump to someone else like that."

I rolled my eyes.

"The wizard was right about that," Atem started, making me narrow my eyes at him, "real love does not exist in your world, does it? I have not seen a good enough example even once since I came."

"Alec and Ro are a good example." *As were Aunt Maya and Uncle Ethan.*

Atem snorted, but didn't deny that. Instead, he continued to shake his head as he walked off, Neferkiti following behind him, "what a waste of my concern... on such an immature little girl."

I watched him with annoyance as he walked off, but then went back into my business.

However, after changing into my pajamas and getting ready for bed... I started to think about what he said.

Because deep down, I knew he was right.

My 'interest' in Blake must not have been that serious if I would just say yes to Dom like that...

Even just the fact that I couldn't tell Blake... did that mean my 'interest' in him wasn't great enough?

Did that make me an immature little girl?

I scratched my head hard and pulled my covers over me, huffing loudly and hoping that Akhenatem could hear my annoyance from the other room.

Dom had texted me the address of the restaurant early that morning. He told me he was coming straight from work so I told him I'd just meet him there. It was really close to my brother's apartment, so I could walk there.

He told me it was a semi-fancy restaurant that required semi-formal attire.

So I wore a normal pink dress with black stockings cause of the cold. I also chose to wear brand new heels, since it was close by. But I had a feeling that I was going to regret that later since I hadn't broken into them yet. If I did a lot of walking, I would probably get some serious blisters.

Hopefully, Dom would drop me off in whatever vehicle he may be bringing.

If he was bringing one, at least.

Atem... well, he didn't like the idea that I was going on a 'date' with Dom. I had told him that Dom was the guy he punched out when he first met and Atem instantly looked even more displeased than he already was.

Apparently, Atem didn't like the way Dom was 'looking at him' that night.

Well, to be fair to Dom... I'd also glare at someone who broke my nose.

Anyways, Atem wasn't happy about it and we got in a tiny fight when I was leaving.

But really... what could I say?

He was right.

Did I *really* like Blake? Or was it exactly what Atem liked it call it... an infatuation?

Why would I say yes to Dom so easily?

I sighed as I sat at a bench in the waiting area of the restaurant.

It was seven and Dom said we were meeting at seven.

He wasn't here.

It was very much like Dom to be late.

It was also very much like him to be unorganized.

But me being me, well, I decided to give him the benefit of the doubt.

We weren't exactly in high school anymore. Maybe... just maybe, a couple of months changed him.

It was when seven-thirty passed that I got annoyed and called Dom.

He didn't pick up right away, but when he did, he started speaking immediately.
"Oh god, I'm so sorry."

"Where are you?"

"Are you there already?"

"Yeah," I said, sounding annoyed but not trying to be rude, "I'm here."

"I can't make it."

I blinked, "what?"

"I'm so sorry, something came up."

"Why didn't you call me and tell me? I've been waiting for thirty minutes."

"I'm sorry." Was all he could say.

I let out a breath, "it's fine. I'll talk to you later." I said before I hung up and marched out of the restaurant.

I was furious.

Was I just... stood up?

My, technically, first date involved me being stood up?

And by Dom, of all people?

Really?

I scoffed to myself as I started walking down the cold streets in my heels.

I've always believed in second chances. Maybe it was because I always needed them myself. Or maybe it was because I was just a hopeful person. But whatever the case, you get what you give, right?

So time and time again, I have given people that second chance that they may or may not have needed. And I was always proven wrong. Always.

Now I was done.

I couldn't deal with this any more.

I had no more second chances left in me to give.

And as I walked down the street feeling the blisters forming within the heels that I had yet to break in to, I swallowed back that last bit of kindness I had to offer.

Stupid, immature boys.

Stupid, immature girls too.

Stupid everyone. Everyone who thought it was okay to bail out on his or her patiently waiting date.

And as I criticized a good chunk of the worlds population, my heel conveniently slipped on ice.

I heard a crack and would have fallen on the floor if there weren't a wall next to me.

When I looked down I saw that not only were my feet bleeding a little, but my right ankle was probably busted now too.

I tilted my head back. Every inch of me wanted to scream because of the stinging pain and the annoying evening. But every inch of me also wanted to not look like an idiot. So I remained silent and just let my eyes water instead.

I should have just asked Blake out.

God, I should have just asked him out.

This would *not* have happened if Blake was my date.

Taking off my heels, I began to limp a couple steps forward. Then I felt stupid. So I stopped and stood there like an idiot, not knowing what to do.

Call Aurora. I thought. *She'll have her car.*

She'll pick me up.

But just as I pulled my cellphone out of my purse, I heard my name being called.

I looked up.

Atem.

He walked towards me with his hands in his pockets, thick jacket on along with his scarf and hat.

As always, that 'I'm much better than you' look was on his face. Now more than ever because he was disappointed with my decision to go on this date with Dom.

Man... this was definitely going to be an 'I told you so' moment, wasn't it?

But, to be honest, I couldn't deny that I saw the strange look of concern.

"What are you doing here?" I asked him immediately, "Why did you leave on your own?"

He shrugged, "I was hungry and I know how to purchase food. So I was going to purchase food at the market place you always go to." He then pointed at my feet, not waiting for me to say anything, "what on earth is wrong with your feet? Why have you removed your shoes?"

I was suddenly embarrassed and didn't respond.

It was clear that he saw my embarrassment and to my surprise, he didn't ask any more questions.

Instead, he put his hands back into his pockets and sighed. "You look ridiculous."

I bit the inside of my cheek, knowing well that I should have expected something like that to come out of the mouth of this arrogant (yet rather smart, I must admit) Pharaoh.

So without thinking, I started to walk past him, barefoot.

Well, limp.

Probably looking... like he said... ridiculous.

Then, to my surprise, he grabbed my arm. I turned around quickly to snap at him but before I could, he had already lifted me up, cradling me in his arms. "Wha—what are—"

"You *cannot* walk home like that," he said, "you'll hurt yourself more, idiot."

Despite being even more embarrassed than I already was, noticing the looks and stares as Atem carried me back towards the apartment, my heart skipped a beat.

This was the first time I have ever heard him call me an *idiot*.

And for some reason, though I may have been imagining it... there was something endearing about the way he used it.

So I didn't try to fight out of his arms.

Plus, I couldn't walk because my ankle was ruined anyways.

I had no other choice at this moment but to let him carry me.

So I wrapped my arms around his neck and held on tightly to both him and my heels.

"Why did you wear such shoes if you knew you were going to be walking home?"

"I didn't know I was going to be walking home."

Pause.

I saw him looking at me but I pretended not to notice, keeping my eyes on the sequins at the bottom of my dress.

"You are upset... because the fool abandoned you, didn't he?"

The fool. I thought, a small smirk on my face. *Perfect.*

He didn't need me to answer, because somehow he knew he was right.

I waited for him to laugh.

This sounded like something he would laugh at, especially after he basically 'told me so'.

But instead, he just let out a small huff.

"Do you plan to go on another date with him?"

"Never." My answer was quick.

"Good," he surprised me by saying, "because you may be a completely hopeless idiot but you are too good of a woman to be treated like that."

There he goes again.

The insult followed by the compliment.

But for some reason, the insult was left ignored by my heart as my cheeks started to burn.

I liked the way that sounded.

Especially coming out of *his* mouth.

So I found myself smiling. "Thank you," I said, looking at him, "I appreciate that."

He looked straight ahead. "You're welcome."

When we got home, he only put me down to get his keys out and open the door. Then he took me to my room and sat me down on my bed.

I lifted my legs onto my bed and examined my ankle. "I think I need to go to the doctor—"

Atem snorted, "this is nothing." He then surprised me by grabbing my leg and lifting it up to examine the sprain.

My eyes widened as he touched my foot, but then I started grinning, "so the almighty Pharaoh is touching the feet of a commoner. How precious."

Akhenatem rolled his eyes but didn't say anything to that.

He then put my foot back on the bed and left.

A moment later, he returned with a small bucket of cold water.

"What are you—"

"I've treated injured ankles many times—"

"You are *not* a doctor, Atem."

Atem snorted again, "in Egypt, the way young boys play is by wrestling. We ride horses, lift weights, go hunting, racing, swimming... do you know how many times in my life I have fallen off a chariot while racing? I've broken bones over a

hundred times in my life and never once did I need a doctor," he smirked, "I also had a little brother who broke his bones as many times as I did. And I was the one who helped him. Not a doctor."

I didn't know what to say to that.

So I just sighed, "fine. Just patch me up."

He sat down where he was sitting before and grabbed a hold of my foot again. After examining it for another moment, he rubbed a spot on my ankle and then nodded to himself. "I'm going to push the bone back in place," he glanced over at me, "this may hurt a little."

And just as I narrowed my eyes to question him, he quickly twisted my ankle awkwardly and I squealed in pain.

That hurt.

A lot.

Once my squealing was over, I looked at him with tears in my eyes, "a *little*?"

Atem responded with a small half smile but didn't say anything. He then went on to stick my foot in the ice-cold water, making me gasp.

"Give it two days," Atem said as he stood up, "it'll be healed."

I wiped the tears from my eyes and sighed, "yeah, okay."

And then Atem walked away.

I let out a breath and closed my eyes for a second.

Then I heard Atem return.

When I opened my eyes, he was standing at my door, not looking at me, "and... if you need anything... just ask."

My eyebrows rose in surprise.

But then I smiled, "thanks, Atem," I started, "for everything."

"Whatever," he said as he walked off.

And I didn't miss the embarrassed look on his face which made my heart do this weird thing that I couldn't really figure out.

Chapter 14 - [Beauty and the Friend]

Atem was right about my ankle taking two days to get better. The day after the whole Dom thing, I was pretty much stuck in bed while Atem brought me what I needed.

The second day, I was up again and walking, but it still hurt a bit.

By the third day, I was pretty much back to normal.

Atem was a great help while I was injured. He didn't look like he particularly enjoyed helping me out so much but he still did it. And I was really grateful.

Within those three days, I had explained to Atem who Dom was to me and why I didn't really appreciate him so much. And for some reason, Atem found my reason funny.

He said that that's something that is common between his world and mine. Girls complaining about how unreliable boys are.

But anyways, the two days of being stuck in bed were perfect. The first semester of University was coming to an end within the next couple of days, meaning that I was in final exam season.

Meaning that me being stuck in bed allowed me to study since I had nothing better to do.

So the day after I was back up, I was off to write my first exam. It was at six in the evening till eight and originally I was super annoyed at how late it was... but when it was over, I was beaming. I think it went really well.

Atem walked with me to the exam center of our campus because he thought that since I was so 'clumsy' I might slip and injure my fragile ankle again.

When I teased him for worrying about me, he denied it and said that he wanted me to pass my exam and get a good job so that I could continue to pay for him.

But of course, I knew deep down he actually did worry about me. At least a little.

And when I finished the exam I walked out with a smile on my face, only to be surprised by Atem sitting outside, reading.

"You waited?" I asked as I rushed to him.

He looked at me and shrugged, "well, the weather is not so bad."

I chuckled, "thanks 'Tem."

"I said don't call me that," he said as he stood up and started walking in the direction that led to the apartment.

"How was your exam?" He asked as we walked.

"Great!" I said, "I think I might get at least a B!"

I had explained to him how grading worked here and he nodded his head, "why not an A? Is that not the best mark?"

"Yeah, but I don't think I did *that* well."

"Oh," he simply said as pulled his scarf over his face.

I laughed and elbowed him, "you dope."

"What?"

I laughed again, and just as I opened my mouth to explain what dope meant, I heard my name being called.

When I looked up, I saw Aurora and Alec across the street. She was waving frantically at me, trying to get my attention.

I laughed, "hey!" I yelled as I stopped at an intersection and waited to cross.

When I crossed the street with Atem and made it to her, she hugged me tightly, "how's your ankle?"

Aurora knew all about what happened and she had pretty much the same reaction that Atem had. Well, to be honest, she was even more pissed off.

She gave me a good talking too about my choices and I guess I deserved it.

But I was glad that she didn't seem mad at me anymore.

"It's great!" I said, "Atem actually did manage to fix it up."

"And your exam?" Alec asked.

"That was great too! I just finished writing it."

Aurora suddenly looked excited, "ohmigosh, why don't you come and join us then?"

"Where you going?" I asked.

"There's some sort of winter festival going on at Oakville Park!" She said, "come with us!"

"Oh! That would be fun!" I turned to Atem who seemed to have nothing to say.

So we headed out to the park.

Though Atem didn't say anything, I could tell that he just wanted to go home rather than stay out in the cold.

So I decided that we wouldn't spend too much time there. We'd just check it out and then go home.

But when we got there, I was rather amazed. The entire park was lit up with lights and there was so much going on for a weekday evening.

"Apparently this is happening all week," Aurora said, "pretty amazing, huh?"

I nodded. I've never been to a winter festival before.

There was an ice-skating rink set up, winter themed carnival games, ice sculpture competitions and a whole ton of other stuff going on.

The four of us explored for a bit and nothing seemed to impress Atem except for the ice sculpture competitions *and* the winter themed story telling sessions for little kids.

Atem really liked both of those.

In fact, after the story telling sessions ended, he headed back to look at the ice sculptures, and was only distracted from that when music started blasting from a large gazebo not too far away.

It wasn't playing any, like, clubbing songs... they were more like older songs, like Frank Sinatra and stuff.

And there was some sort of dancing lesson going on inside the gazebo.

Aurora seemed excited by that and dragged Alec into it while Atem joined me in sitting at a bench just outside the gazebo to watch them.

"What are they doing?" Atem asked, looking confused.

"Dancing," I chuckled.

"That's dancing? That doesn't look like dancing."

"Well it is." And as I said that, I wondered what dancing in Egypt was like.

"Why is it so slow? And... why does everyone do the same thing?"

I shrugged, "wanna try it out?" I surprised the both of us by asking.

I hate dancing.

Why would I ask him if he wanted to try?

Atem snorted, "no thank you."

"C'mon!" I said, getting up. Though I still didn't know why I wanted to try it out.

Maybe it was because it would be a new experience.

Atem was about to say no but I grabbed his hand and pulled him, "c'mon, the

song is about to end."

Atem continued to protest but didn't pull his hand away, which made me assume that deep down, he kinda wanted to see what this whole dancing thing was about.

The second we got to the gazebo, they started to play the Michael Bublé and Idina Menzel version of Baby It's Cold Outside. And I liked that song a lot.

And just as the lesson on dancing started, both Atem and I proved to be horrible dancers.

We had zero problem with the closeness of the dancing, which was what I thought would be the problem. Maybe it was because he had already carried me a bunch of times and that was as close as two people could probably get.

The problem was, instead, how bad we were at following instructions and moving together.

It was actually kind funny, how bad we were...

Both of us were stepping on each other's feet and falling behind the rest of the dancers.

Eventually, we both realized that it was a bad idea and vacated the premises in the hopes that we wouldn't kill anyone with our horrible dancing.

But I did have a good laugh.

Even Atem found himself smirking and chuckling here and there.

And very soon after that, we said goodbye to Aurora and Alec, who wanted to stay a little longer, and headed back home.

As we walked home, Atem kept complaining about the fact that what we just did *wasn't* dancing.

"How can dancing be so stiff?" Atem asked as we entered the elevator of my building.

"That's true... but there are lots of different types of dancing, Atem. And besides, I'm pretty sure it's not as stiff as that. We were just bad at it. You should see how people ballroom dance in the movies."

"Is that what it's called? Ballroom dance?"

I nodded, "yep."

"Well, dancing in Egypt is nothing like that," he said, right as we exited the elevator and made it to my door, "it is much more free and much more exciting."

"Do you actually dance?" I asked, as I unlocked my door.

"Well, no. But it is much more entertaining."

I chuckled, "well, I guess you're right. But you should see Korean boy bands and their dancing. Oh my goodness, they are fantastic," I said as I opened the door, "actually, I'll show you One of a Kind by G-Dragon as soon as I change into my pajamas. G-Dragon is like, an amazing dancer. He's my favorite Korean celebrity. So is TaeYang. I think Tae Yang is like, the *best* dancer... like, I'll also show you Wedding—"

I realized he wasn't paying attention to what I was saying when he grabbed my arm and pushed me behind him, "stay behind me."

"What—"

And just then, I saw a man wearing grey sweat pants and no shirt, with a towel over his head, walk out of the washroom and towards the living room.

He didn't notice us at first as he dried his hair, but just as he passed the door, he turned to look at us.

I let out a breath.

And though Atem stood protectively in front of me, I started to laugh and ran around him and into the arms of the man.

It was my older brother.

Marv chuckled as I hugged him tightly, "hey, kiddo."

I was almost in tears.

It had been so long since I've seen him.

"What are you doing here?" I asked as I pulled out of the hug but didn't let him go.

"Back for Christmas."

The last time I saw him was last Christmas, so I shouldn't be surprised. He was always so busy with school.

I hugged him again, "I missed you so much!" I squealed as I hugged him as tightly as I could, "are you gonna be staying here?"

He smiled and patted my back, "I wish," he sighed, "mom and dad want me to stay with them for Christmas. People are coming over constantly and they want me to be there. I told them I'm actually arriving the day after tomorrow so that I could stay here for a day or two."

I frowned, "oh man...."

"Why don't you come stay there—"

"No way."

He sighed again, "fine. But I'll come over and visit as frequently as I can."

I pulled away and looked at my tall brother. He, like me, had somewhat tanned skin and black hair except his hair was short.

Marv also had these lovely light brown eyes that everyone loved and he was actually a really good-looking guy. Plus he wasn't just really fit and good-looking, he was also really kind.

He got all the good genes.

My parents literally gave him everything.

But, that being said, I *loved* my older brother. He was always there for me and I could always rely on him.

Right now, I was just glad to see him.

And to be honest, I had completely forgotten about Atem until my brother looked over at him with a rather stern and unsure look.

Atem returned the look, though I could easily tell that Atem was *extremely* confused.

I turned to Atem and chuckled, "Atem, meet my brother, Marv."

Atem hesitated but the confusion left his face, "oh. He's your brother."

"This guy is the roommate? Uncle Ethan's friends son?"

I nodded, "he's cool, don't worry," I said as I walked over to Atem and patted his shoulder.

Marv didn't seem to look like he felt any better. But I couldn't blame him. "Well, I'm going to be staying here for a bit so I hope I don't make the place crowded."

"No way!" I said, quickly, "we'd never think that."

Atem crossed his arms, probably thinking otherwise. But I'm sure he knew better than to challenge my *brother*. This was, after all, *his* apartment.

Marv smiled and stepped forward to Atem, "Well, Atem... right?"

Atem nodded.

"It's nice to meet you," my brother held his hand out, "I've heard you've been taking care of my sister so I appreciate that."

Atem took his hand and shook it, "It is nice to meet you too, I guess."

"Let me make everyone dinner!" I said quickly, trying to put an end to the awkwardness.

I thought dinner would make things less awkward, but I was wrong.

Marv and Atem didn't seem to enjoy each other's company. And to be honest, I could understand both of their perspectives.

Atem was just not a people person.

And Marv was worried about my safety.

I couldn't blame either of them.

When it was bedtime, Marv ended up sharing a bed with me. I mean, I wasn't going to make him sleep on the couch and the guest room was currently occupied.

Plus, my bed was big so there was no problem in fitting another person.

When I changed into my PJ's and came into the room, my brother was already lying in bed, "you walk around in your PJ's in front of that guy?" He said, rather softly.

I shrugged.

My PJ's were Iron Man PJ's... because *Iron Man*, that's why. It had red, long silky bottoms that had cute Iron Man's on them and the top was short sleeved and was supposed to look like Iron Man's chest, with the arc reactor and everything.

I didn't see anything wrong with them.

"Why?" I asked, "Atem's cool."

Marv sighed, "seriously May... a guy and a girl rooming together... especially a guy and a girl who barely know each other—"

"I know Atem plenty." Okay, that was kind of a lie.

"If mom and dad find out—"

"They hate me already, it doesn't matter," I said as I sat down on my side of the bed.

"They do *not* hate you, May."

"Yeah they do," I frowned, "but who cares about them."

"May."

I fell back onto the bed next to him, "seriously though, Marv. He's harmless."

"That's what you think, May... but guy's aren't like that. I'm sure he doesn't have good—"

"Atem's pretty much asexual, Marv."

"What?"

"He's too absorbed with himself and his own needs to feel any sort of care for other people," and despite the fact that I thought I meant this, something deep inside me told me I was wrong.

It was a weird feeling.

"He's putting up a front, May," Marv countered, turning in bed to face me, "I'm not an idiot, I can see how he looks at you."

I scoffed and looked at Marv, "how does he look at me?" *With disgust? Annoyance? Repugnance?*

"That guy is *totally* into you, Mayaleena."

Though Marv said it with utmost seriousness, I snorted, sat up and laughed.

Marv rolled his eyes.

I kept laughing for a good minute, and then I looked at him, "you have *got* to be kidding me. *Akhenatem?* Into *me*? That's so ridiculous that it's unimaginable."

"You're too naïve, May. Which is exactly why I don't like that you're living with him. If you can't even tell that the guy likes—"

"Marv!" I threw my hands in the air to be dramatic, "Seriously, you don't get it! This guy *can't* love. Like literally." *Literally*. "You have *nothing* to worry about."

Marv rolled his eyes, "May, I'm telling you this for your own good—"

"I'm not stupid, bro. I can tell if a guy is hitting on me and Atem is *definitely* not the kind to hit on girls. He's way too cocky for that."

Marv rolled around so that his back was facing me, "now that I've told you, you're going to start noticing it. And when you do notice it... don't say I didn't warn you."

I pouted my lips for a second before falling back into bed and pulling the covers over me.

And though I believed every single word I said about Atem's lack of love capabilities... I became very curious as to why my extremely smart brother would think that Atem was into me.

That was impossible.

But I couldn't deny that the thought made my heart skip a beat.

As Marv said, he didn't stay over too long. He was gone to my parents home after another night and to be honest, I was a little relieved. Despite spending more time together, Atem and Marv didn't get along.

They totally silently hissed at each other for random things and I was always there to hear the complaints.

They were acting more like angry territorial cats than Neferkiti ever did.

Besides, even though he was leaving early, Marv and I made plans to spend some days doing random things together. So that would be fun.

But I couldn't get over what Marv said to me that first night.

Atem looks at me funny?

Really?

So for that first day after Marv left, I found myself trying to catch the gaze of

Atem.

And no matter how many times I turned my head suddenly (cracking my neck twice, I must add), I could not catch Atem in the act of 'looking at me.'

He was totally in his own world.

Minding his own business.

Not at all showing any interest in me.

Eventually, I was just about to give up.

But then, obviously, my rather non-discreet looks made him catch me in the act.

When I snapped my head to the left to look at him as he watched Supernatural on the T.V. next to me, he turned and looked at me, narrowing his eyes.

"I have noticed that you've been looking at me constantly today. *What*, may I ask, is the matter?"

I blushed, "nothing," I said, looking away quickly.

He stared at me for a moment and then looked back at the T.V., "sometimes I think you are crazy, woman."

I looked back at him, "my brother told me to watch my back," I lied. Well, sort of. I just didn't want to look weird for looking at him.

I didn't want *him* to think I was into him.

"Watch your back?" Atem asked, looking back at me.

I nodded, "he doesn't know if I should trust you," I crossed my arms, "with good reason, of course."

Atem scoffed, but looked away.

A narrowed my eyes and continued to stare at him "What *do* you think of me, Akhenatem?"

He looked at me again, "what?"

"When we first met, you told me I was ugly and stupid. You said I have no grace and said I smell bad."

I saw the red appear under his dark skin, which surprised me.

Was he... blushing?

"You still... remember that?" He asked as his eyes moved away from my face.

"Huh!" I scoffed, "of course! No one has ever insulted me like that before! But I'm curious to hear what you think of me now. Now that we're friends."

His eyes returned to my face, "*friends?*"

I rolled my eyes, imagining that he was going to say something like '*Huh, peasant! Friend? We are NOT friends! Foolish woman-slash-girl.*' He always alternated between calling me a woman and a girl.

But he surprised me by not saying that, instead, he shrugged. "Well, you still have absolutely *no* grace. I will tell you that much."

I let out a breath, "rude—"

"But I guess you do not smell so bad. Immediately after you wash your hair, you actually smell rather decent—"

The comment seriously surprised me and made my cheeks warm.

"And I do not think you are stupid anymore. And... I guess you are not ugly. But you do look hideous immediately after you wake up. Especially that night you got intoxicated—"

I whacked him hard on the arm but laughed.

Wow.

I guess he didn't think of me as so lowly anymore.

"Fine, you're forgiven for being so rude that night."

"I did *not* ask for forgiveness," Atem said quickly, "when I said it that night, I meant it."

"Yeah, yeah... you just didn't want me to realize that you thought I was the most beautiful and stunning girl you've ever met—"

He let out a short laugh, "hardly."

I whacked him again, making him wince, "stop that."

"Make me," I whacked him again.

He put a hand on my face and pushed my face away, making me snort in laughter, "I am trying to watch this show about supernatural beings. You are the one who told me it was good so let me watch it in peace."

I pushed his hand away, laughing, "fine, fine. Watch away," I stood up, "I'm hungry."

As I got up and walked over to the kitchen, I finally managed to catch a strange glance from Atem.

"What?" I asked, looking straight at him and putting my hands on my hips.

He narrowed his eyes, "you have called me your *friend* a couple times now. Why is that?"

I snorted, *seriously*? "Because," I said, walking to the kitchen again, "you're my friend."

"That's not true," he said, "we aren't friends."

"Then what are you?" I asked, pulling out a pot to make macaroni and cheese, "my husband? My partner-in-crime? My lover? My dad? My brother? None of those other terms work out exactly."

"An acquaintance works just fine."

I scoffed, filling the pot with water, "buddy. We live together. I think we're a little too close to be acquaintances, don't you think?"

He hesitated.

"I know you're too almighty and prestigious to call me a friend but friend is what I am, so deal with it." I dumped the macaroni into the pot.

Atem watched me for a moment, but then looked back at the T.V.

And as I turned on the stove and placed the pot on it, I was a little shocked to hear Atem say: "I have never had a friend before."

I turned and looked at him, "really?"

He just shrugged.

I suddenly grinned, "well, I guess I'm your first friend ever."

I saw him roll his eyes but I kept smiling.

Something about the thought that I was his first friend ever felt good.

And my eyes may have been playing tricks on me, since I wasn't wearing my glasses or contacts, but I could swear that I think I saw a smile on his face too.

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 15 - [Beauty and the Bicycle]

I freaking hated my brother. I hated him so much. After what he said to me about the possibility of Atem being interested in me... that was literally all I could possibly think of.

I found myself staring at him. Trying to decipher every movement of his.

Trying to figure out *what* made my brother think of something so ridiculous.

And no matter how much I stared at him or how much I thought about it... I couldn't figure it out.

There was nothing.

No evidence that Atem was interested in me at all.

But *why* would my brother think that?

I shook my head vigorously and then felt a jab in my arm, "you okay?" Aurora asked.

I was out doing Christmas shopping with Aurora while Atem went to work with Grandma Seetha.

And I wasn't doing a good job paying attention as Aurora picked out a bunch of toys for her little cousins back at home.

"Yeah," I sighed, "fine."

Aurora raised her eyebrows, "you don't look fine."

"I'm fine. Just fine."

"You look seriously troubled."

I sighed again.

Aurora placed the Sailor Moon Barbie into the cart and looked at me carefully, "gurrrrrl," she started, "who do you think you're dealing with? I can tell you've got a problem from a mile away. What's wrong?"

I gave her a funny look, but then sighed for the third time, "my brother was over the other day, remember?"

"Yeah, you told me that went swell..."

"It was swell. But that night he told me that it was obvious Atem was into me."

Aurora narrowed her eyes.

"And it's just been freaking me out since!"

She snorted.

"I can't even think straight!" I said, "all I can think about is whether or not he likes me and—"

"Oh. My. God," Aurora's eyes widened as she cut me off, "do you *like* him?"

I laughed, "*what?*"

"You do!"

I laughed some more, "Are you crazy! Ohmigosh, no way!"

Aurora leaned forward against the cart and looked at me intently.

"He's a total jerk. I mean, he's an *evil* Pharaoh for crying out loud. How could I like him?"

She kept looking at me, "but now that I think back... he may be a jerk but whenever you talk about all the good things he's done for you... you always look all... weird."

"Don't be silly, Ro."

"Oh god, May. You are *totally* into him."

"Ro!"

"Maybe you heard your brother wrong," she straightened up, grinning, "maybe he was saying that it's so obvious that you're into him?"

I did *not* hear my brother wrong. I heard him loud and clear.

That's why I've been so messed up ever since.

"No. I heard him right. And stop it Ro! I don't like him that way. He's just a friend."

"Mhmm."

I nudged her hard and then started to walk off.

"Hey!" Ro called after me. I heard the cart start rolling as she followed me, "I'm just playing."

"Yeah, yeah," I mumbled as I turned into the stationary section of the store.

I decided I was going to ignore Aurora until she apologized for her totally unnecessary accusation.

And while I ignored her, I came across some interactive journals that seemed really cool. They were these notebooks that were filled with questions that you could answer.

One particular one was a journal that prompted the user to write about themselves. It asked questions as simple as 'what's your favorite colour' to questions as deep as 'was there a lesson you learned in your life that stuck with you?'

It seemed super interesting.

Plus, it looked really pretty.

So I grabbed one.

Actually, I grabbed two.

I put them in my basket and Aurora, who was standing behind me, raised an eyebrow.

"Why are you getting two?"

At this point... well, me being me, I already forgot I was ignoring her, "one for Atem, I feel like this would be good for his soul. Like..." I hesitated, seeing Ro's grin widen.

"Atem, huh? Always thinking about him."

I nudged her again and walked away, huffing in annoyance.

Ro laughed, "listen. May," she said, following me with her cart rolling loudly, "I know I'm just joking around but... in my complete and honest opinion, I don't think that guy is *that* bad."

I rolled my eyes but didn't say anything.

"After what you've said about all the help he's been to you, I think he's got the complete capability to be a gentleman, someone's just got to teach him to do it right."

"That doesn't mean I *like* him."

"No," she continued, "it doesn't, but this whole evil Pharaoh thing... it's ridiculous. If he was actually evil, there's no way he'd be carrying you home because you twisted your ankle. If he was evil, he would have laughed at you, twisted your other ankle and then left you to suffer in the cold."

Wow.

That would have been harsh.

"I don't believe this 'evil' thing and I don't think you should either," she said, "and what I'm trying to say is... don't let this idea that he's evil hold you back from—"

"I don't like him, Ro," I said as I turned around, knowing what she was going to say.

She held her hands up defensively, "okay, okay. Let's stop talking about this."

"Thank you."

And we did just that.

But unfortunately it didn't help much in making me feel better about this entire situation.

Aurora dropped me in front of my apartment since she had Alec's car and as I made my way up the elevator, I contemplated whether I should give Atem the journal thing now, or later.

It was something that people were supposed to do over the span of a year, so maybe closer to the New Year was better.

But I already bought him a couple of Christmas gifts that were wrapped up and under the tree.

Would this being added to that be too many gifts?

Well, for now I decided to keep it in my bag. I guess I could figure it out later.

After I opened my door and walked into the apartment, I expected to see Atem watching T.V. but he wasn't.

It was actually rather quiet here.

Was he not home?

But just as I took off my shoes, Neferkiti came rushing out of Atem's room and Atem came following behind her, "oh," he started, "you're home."

I smiled, "how was work?" I asked as I bent down and picked up the ever-expanding Neferkiti.

She was pretty big now, and kind of heavy.

But that didn't stop me from lifting her up.

"Good," he said, "your grandmother gave me lunch."

"Well that's good," I asked Grandma Seetha for a day off today since Aurora really wanted my help picking out the toys for her family. Apparently I was good at picking out gifts for kids since I was rather childish myself.

At first, Atem seemed like he had nothing else to say so I was about to walk into the kitchen to get some chocolate milk, but he surprised me by grabbing my arm.

I looked at him, "what."

"Come with me."

Before I could question him, he was dragging me into his bedroom.

I was thoroughly confused, but when we made it to his room, he let go of my arm and crossed his, staring at the object that was in front of him rather proudly.

I was staring too.

It was an absolutely lovely baby blue, vintage looking bicycle. It had a carrier on the back and a cute woven basket and it was literally the cutest bike I have ever seen.

In fact...

It was *the* bike I've wanted to get ever since I started university.

The very same bike that I went to look at every week or so to see if the price reduced even the slightest.

I looked at Atem.

What was *he* doing with this bike?

He was smiling proudly, obviously pleased with whatever he had done. However, I was just plain confused.

"What..."

He looked at me with a smirk, "is this not the bicycle you wanted?" He said the word bicycle funny... kind of like bye-sigh-cal.

But I was still confused, "yeah. But what's it doing here?"

He rolled his eyes, "you idiot," he said, "are you not the one who told me that the Christmas tradition involves purchasing gifts?"

"You *bought* this?" I gaped, letting Neferkiti jump out of my arms so she can examine the bike.

"Of course I did."

"How—"

"With the money I saved up from working at your grandmother's shop."

I kept gaping.

Ever since Atem started working at Grandma Seetha's, he would give his pay to me and I would put all of it into paying my rent to my dad except for between twenty and thirty dollars. I would let Atem keep that twenty or thirty dollars for himself for whatever he wanted.

And I never asked what he did with it... or cared for that matter.

But... he was saving it up?

For me?

"No way..." I whispered.

He nodded, "you always go and look at this thing but never buy it. So I thought why not get it for you, since I don't know what else I could possibly get you."

"You *seriously* bought this for me?" I've wanted it so badly but never had enough money to get it.

"Yes, did you not hear me the first—"

Without a hesitation I squealed before I jumped into the arms of this supposedly evil Pharaoh.

He let out a shocked breath, literally as if I had knocked the air out of him with my tight, sudden hug.

But I couldn't help it.

I wanted this bike so badly and he had gotten it for me.

This was ridiculously awesome!

"What are you—"

"You are absolutely *amazing* Atem! Thank you so much!" I smushed my face into his chest because I think I was getting teary.

"Okay... but—"

"How did you even get it here in the snow?" I continued, "you are so awesome! I love it! Thank you!"

"Alright. You're welcome but—"

"I can't believe it!" I tightened my hug and started jumping too, probably making him really uncomfortable, "I'm going to have to wait till spring to ride it but I can't wait!"

He grabbed my shoulders and made me pull away from him, "you are going to break my spine, woman," he said, hands still on my shoulders but looking at me with a serious expression.

I laughed, "I'm sorry... I'm just..." I clapped my hands together, "oh my goodness, I'm so happy!" I turned and looked at the bike, touching it and examining every inch of it.

It was *the* exact bike I wanted.

"Though," I started, "you're actually supposed to wrap Christmas gifts up and give them *on* Christmas."

Atem rolled his eyes, "whatever."

I laughed.

As you could imagine, I spent the rest of the day *thrilled*.

I had the bike of my dreams now.

And surprisingly it was all thanks to Atem.

By the end of the day, I was still super happy, but also tired from all that walking I did with Aurora earlier that day. The happiness also probably took a toll on me.

I had decided that I was going to go to bed early. But by go to bed I meant sit in bed and read for a bit until I was too tired to function.

I purchased a new book a couple days ago.

It was A Christmas Carol.

I've seen all the movies and all the shows but I've never actually read the book, so I decided that this year was the year that I read the book.

And just as I opened up the book, Atem walked to my door, "Neferkiti is out of cat food," he said with a straight face.

I chuckled, pushing my glasses up. That face of his always made me want to laugh. "Yeah, okay. I'll go buy some first thing tomorrow."

"What are you reading?" He suddenly asked.

"A Christmas Carol," I then thought of something, "wanna read it with me?"

He shrugged, "I haven't got anything better to do."

I patted the seat next to me on my bed and waited for him to come sit down. When he did, he made himself comfortable rather quickly and leaned against the headboard before looking at the book. "What is it about?"

"Well, I actually bought it because it reminds me of you."

"What?"

"It's about a guy who hate's Christmas and is really, really mean—"

"I do *not* hate Christmas," Atem said, "I think it's a rather decent tradition. It helps to make your winters a little less miserable."

I laughed, "but he's still super mean."

"Huh."

I grinned before flipping the book open, "it's a good story. At least, the movie was good."

"Then hurry up and start reading. I'm getting tired."

I rolled my eyes but did what he said.

We read the story for about an hour and a half and I only stopped when I felt something on my shoulder.

And almost immediately, my heart started to race.

Atem was asleep.

On my shoulder.

Both Atem and I were lying against two pillows while I held the book over me and read, but his head had tilted slightly to the left so that it touched my shoulder.

I swallowed back my nervousness, realizing how weird this was, and then slowly pulled away.

His face fell to the pillow, not waking him up and I sighed in relief.

But just as I finished my relieved sigh, I looked back at him and felt a strange feeling inside me.

For such a tough guy... he was a real peaceful sleeper.

His breathing was soft, his lips slightly parted. He looked so many years younger right now and I was literally... kind of taken aback.

I wiggled down back onto the bed next to him and turned around to face him, awkwardly staring at his face as he slept.

He was really... pretty.

With flawless copper skin and literally no pores.

God, was I a mess next to this guy.

You should see *me* when I sleep.

Oh lord was I terrifying.

But this guy.

Well, he was a pretty sleeper.

Why did all the mean people always get the good looks?

But as I thought that, I blinked it away. *No*, I thought, *he's not mean. Not anymore at least.*

I really wonder what it could possibly have been... what made such a peaceful sleeper turn into a supposedly evil Pharaoh.

What did he do? Maybe it was an accident? A really bad accident?

He just didn't fit the role of an evil Pharaoh.

Aurora was right.

An evil person wouldn't carry a girl with a broken ankle down the street. An evil person wouldn't worry about my cat running out of food. An evil person would not want to come sit next to me and read a book.

And an evil person would not buy me the bicycle I've been wanting all year.

This guy was *not* evil.

That was final.

But what on earth was it then? What was behind that coldness of his?

I knew he wouldn't answer me if I asked.

But I was dying to know.

Did Aunty Maya know? Maybe if I went through her research, I could find some sort of clue.

That's it.

That's exactly what I'll do.

But for now, I found myself smiling as I pulled the covers over him and let him sleep in my bed.

Where was I going to sleep tonight?

Would it be weird if I just stayed here?

Well, it *was* my bed.

As long as I stayed on my side of the bed, I guess it wouldn't be too weird.

It was kind of strange how okay this was to me. Any other guy and I would be freaking out right now.

I had just become so comfortable with Atem. He was like a best friend now, as weird as that sounded.

I mean, I was even familiar with his distinct scent. And that scent was also super comforting.

I guess I had just gotten really close to him... weird. Yeah.

But just as I was about to turn around in my bed, Aurora's words earlier today flashed back into my mind.

Oh god, May. You are totally into him.

I swallowed hard as my breathing hastened.

No. It was *not* true.

There was no way I had a thing for this guy. He was just a friend.

But what normal person likes to admire the face of their sleeping friend? The deep, stupid, annoying side of me said to myself.

NOPE. No way.

No.

I got up from my bed and decided I was going to sleep on the couch.

No.

I did *not* like this guy.

Maybe a little bit? That evil side of me continued.

No.

Just...

I sighed loudly, closed my bedroom door and made my way to the couch.

I didn't like him...

And as I sat down on the couch, my fingers dug into the fabric and my racing heart decided to tell me otherwise.

Yes you do, stupid.

You've got a crush on an evil Pharaoh.

My Social Media!



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mathiyalagan

Chapter 16 - [Beauty and the Troubled Past]

As I had decided the night before, I was going to do some research on Akhenatem. So as soon as I woke up the next morning, in pain might I add since I wasn't used to sleeping on a couch, I changed into something decent and made my way to the Oakville University Library.

This library was the best library in our country, so I was certain that by the time I was done in there, all my questions would be answered.

Aunty Maya's research would be in here too. And other things as well.

The only problem I had was that it was like, four days till Christmas and I was at a library. I mean, yeah, I was kind of a nerd but not that much of a nerd.

Oh well.

A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do. Right?

So when I made it in, the library was practically empty aside from a few hard workers who were studying for god knows what. There were no line ups for the elevator like there usually are during the semester, so I calmly went and checked the online catalogue, no rushing needed. Conveniently, all the Egyptian stuff were on the ninth floor of this fifteen floor library, which was awesome because that meant I didn't have to run up and down floors.

When I searched up Akhenatem, I wrote down the wing and call number of the journal that Aunty Maya's research paper was in and headed up to the ninth floor.

When I got there, I let out a breath like I always did in this library.

If fifteen floors didn't make you understand how big this library was, you needed

to see each floor itself. Each floor was practically a library in itself. Maybe even bigger. The floor had five wings, lettered from A to E, and each wing had shelves and shelves and shelves and shelves of books. It was truly massive.

I headed over to wing E and searched for maybe a good ten minutes before I finally found the set of shelves that may have had Aunt Maya's paper in it.

After another ten minutes, I finally spotted the hundreds of books titled "Journal of Egyptian History." And then I went on searching for another two minutes for the volume in which Aunt Maya's research was in. Volume 73 to be exact.

When I found it, I let out a relieved sigh.

And then I walked around for another thirty minutes, picking out as many books as I could find about the fall of Ancient Egypt. There weren't many books specifically on Akhenaten, though many had at least a chapter on him, so I grabbed a hold of as many as I could.

When I was finally done, I walked over to a desk, dropped down all the books and sat.

I wanted to look at Aunt Maya's journal first, but I decided to save that for last. I didn't know why but I just did.

So I flipped through the other ten or so books I had, reading through either a chapter on Akhenaten or the paragraph they had.

Gosh, you would think they would have way more on the guy that practically caused the fall of Egypt, no?

And what sucked was that there wasn't anything particularly interesting in these books.

Well, all except one book.

One book, written by Richard Daniels, was on only the fall of Egypt. In the chapter prior to that of Akhenaten, it talked about the rather successful reign of the king before him.

Akhenaten's father.

Ahmenmose III.

Apparently he was an excellent king. A king who was loved by his people. He had complete control over his nation, Egypt prospered greatly during his reign, and there were no international problems at all.

There was, however, a serious war that was avoided with the Hittites. According to Richard Daniels, he married the daughter of the Hittite king to appease him and prevent a war.

The Hittite girl was his second wife.

And Akhenatem's mother, Satiah, was the first wife.

There was a third wife too, Neitha-Matia, who was the mother of Khamenatem. And from what I remember... Khamenatem was the one that wrote that poem which Atem read to my uncle months ago.

I scratched my head, trying to decipher all of this.

This was basically all I had for Atem's past.

And from what I'm getting, Atem had a good dad and three moms.

Prior to reading this book, my best guess would have been that he had horrible parents, which lead to his coldness.

But his mother was obviously not horrible, I mean, she died trying to pray for his safety, right?

And now... neither was his father?

AH! I shouted in my head, so frustrating!

But hey... I should be happy for him, right? Even if my questions were still unanswered.

So I read on.

The chapter on Akhenatem was short. All that it told me was that he became king at a young age after his father died, possible of some sort of illness, and

then it told me the myth behind his role in the fall of Egypt.

He was cursed and disappeared.

Of course, I know that that was true. But Richard Daniels tossed the myth aside calling it just that, a myth.

I didn't blame him though.

Richard Daniels states that Egypt fell because the Romans invaded it and destroyed it after Akhenatem disappeared. And to this, he argues three possible scenarios for how he disappeared.

The first was that he was secretly attacked and killed by the Romans prior to their invasion.

Well, I know that's not true.

The second was that his own people overthrew him, since there is evidence of his cruelty in certain ancient texts. And before order could have been returned and any sort of record of this could be made, the Roman's invaded.

No. Not true, again.

And the third possible scenario was that he knew of the upcoming Roman attack, knew he couldn't fight it off, and decided to escape while he got the chance.

Again. Nope.

Daniels went on to argue that he thinks the most likely scenario is the second one he stated. But this was no help to me at all. I know that he's wrong.

Akhenatem was cursed by some psycho wizard and sent to the future.

I smirked at the thought of reading something like that in a book as scholarly as this.

I closed the book and sighed.

Well, yeah I learned a little bit more about Akhenatem, but none of these books helped answer my question at all.

Why is he mean? Why was he so cold and why was he considered a cruel and evil Pharaoh?

So I set the book aside and pulled over the journal that Aunty Maya's paper was in.

I only learned the uses of a journal in the twelfth grade and I only actually started using it when I started university. And as useful as they were for essays, it took me a while to get used to them.

The simplest way to put it is that Journals are kind of like magazines. Really scholarly, professional, and sometimes boring magazines. They're books filled with a bunch of articles written by very educated people who've either gotten their PhD's or at least a masters. Every article in a journal was always reviewed extensively, commented on by other scholars and only the best usually get into actual journals.

But anyhow, it was quite remarkable that my aunt's paper was in here.

From what I knew, she had written a couple. So had Uncle Ethan. But this was the only one that was going to be useful to what I wanted to know about today.

I flipped through the book until I landed on the article titled simply as Akhenatem, written by Maya Devarajah.

I smiled as I touched the necklace I got from her. Devarajah was my mother's family name. After marrying my uncle, she took their name and somehow, reminding myself of that made me miss her more.

I don't know why. But it's always those tiny, weird things, you know?

I sat comfortably in my chair and read through this paper. The abstract said that it was going to shine some light on the life of Akhenatem himself as a way to find out how certain things in his life may have contributed to his disappearance and the fall of Egypt.

And that's exactly what her paper did.

It talked a lot about tiny pieces of evidence that my aunty had found. Tiny things like the use of certain words over others on the walls of the tombs of important

officials during Akhenatem's reign. Or things like the weapons and stuff that were buried with certain family members of Akhenatem.

But what was most important was my Aunt and Uncle's discovery of a particular tomb.

The tomb of Neitha-Matia. Khamenatem's mother... the third wife of Ahmenmose III. Akhenatem's stepmother.

According to my aunty, she had a tiny tomb that possibly had some treasures, though if they did they were robbed in antiquity. But what Aunty Maya focused on was the fact that evidence on the walls of this tomb suggest that she was murdered.

Now... this was something to go on. I knew my aunty wouldn't let me down.

Aunty Maya then stated that this murder, along with some of the things written on the wall suggests possible political turmoil during Akhenatem's youth. She also backed this up by adding that there was a strange increase in the number of high classed tombs that were found during the time period of Akhenatem's youth too.

It would have been unquestioned by Egyptian law that Akhenatem was to be king once his father passed. He was the first son of Ahmenmose III's primary wife after all. But maybe after the previous Pharaoh's death, there was some sort of problem, which led to a lot of deaths.

And this problem was what caused the harsh and strict reign of Pharaoh Akhenatem.

Which then, in turn, would have possible led to him being overthrown prior to the Roman Invasion. Aunty Maya also believed that it is possible that the people who fuelled the coup d'état were Romans themselves as they wanted to find an easy way into Egypt.

Which made me wonder... could the wizard have been Roman?

But whatever the case... that was it for Aunty Maya's paper.

And though it didn't answer all my questions... it did tell me one thing.

Though his parents may have been great, something about Akhenatem's childhood was rough. And that was pretty important.

The next question was whether or not I was going to be able to get Akhenatem to tell me about it.

But after stacking the books neatly to make it easier for the librarians to reshelv them, I made my way out of the library wondering if it was really that important for me to find out the truth.

I mean... wasn't this enough? I knew way more than I did this morning... and maybe that was enough?

Why did I need to know more?

This was all I really needed to know in order to understand that Akhenatem was not just an evil, cold-hearted person. There was more to it.

And just as I left the building, I got a text.

I pulled out my phone and was surprised to see that it was Akhenatem. I found myself smiling for no apparent reason.

Where are you? Was the text.

Obviously, since he could read and write pretty well now, he was able to text me with more specific things.

I looked at my watch, it was almost eleven-thirty.

Coming!!!! =) I responded.

I was back home in almost fifteen minutes and when I saw Atem standing in the kitchen, waiting for the microwave to finish microwaving, I found myself not being able to make eye contact.

God. I shouldn't have read that book with him last night.

None of this nonsense about liking him would have happened if I just read on my own.

"Where have you been all morning?" Atem asked as I took off my shoes.

"At the library," I said.

"Why?" The microwave started beeping.

I looked at him. He was leaning against the counter, arms crossed with only curiosity in his eyes.

"I was doing research on you."

Now he narrowed his eyes, "what? Why?"

"I'd never gotten around to reading what Aunty Maya had written about you and I was curious to see what she had to say."

"And what did she say?" His eyes were still narrowed and now he looked both suspicious and annoyed.

"Do you really want to know?" I leaned forward and the island of the kitchen, looking him straight in the eyes, though I could feel my cheeks warming.

"Of course I want to know what's written about me."

"Well, in that case, I was doing research and all of the other people who wrote about you said one or all of three things as to what happened to you. One of it was that you were overthrown, the other was that you were killed by the Romans and the last is that you ran off with your tail between your legs when the Romans attacked."

"All of which are wrong," he said, firmly.

"Yeah, I know," I continued, "but Aunty Maya is the only scholar who I could find who focused more on before any of this happened. If anything, she suspected that the most possible reason for why you disappeared was that you were overthrown, but she had also written about the possibility of some sort of political problem going on when you were a kid. She discovered the tomb of one of your step-mother's... um..." I looked up to think, "Neitha... Neitha Ma—"

"Neitha-Matia," he said.

When I looked at him, I saw that his face had changed. He looked... unhappy.

"Yeah. Her. Your step-mother," I said, starting to feel that he was getting uncomfortable with the topic, "she was murdered, wasn't she?"

Atem blinked before he nodded, "she was."

I nodded too, "well, that, along with some other stuff, made Aunty Maya think that a lot went on right when you became King."

I was kind of hoping he would expand further. But he didn't at all. He just kept looking at me.

"Was she right?"

He looked at me for another moment before looking away and turning around and opening the microwave.

"Well?"

"My childhood is none of your concern."

I didn't say anything in response to that, but I took that as a yes.

My aunty was right.

I let out a breath, "okay. That's fine."

I think my response surprised him, because he turned his head slightly for a moment before going back to preparing his lunch.

It was late in the evening and Atem and I hadn't talked since we last talked after I got home from the library. He was obviously mad at me for digging into his past and to be honest, I knew he would be.

I also think I knew he'd eventually get over it.

I was sitting on my couch on my laptop when he walked out of his room and slumped down on the other couch to the right of me.

When I looked at him, I saw him scowling at me before he blinked and then sighed, "I do not want you to go and try and figure things out about me without me knowing."

"So if you know then you're fine with it?" I said, trying to be funny.

He rolled his eyes, "No."

"That's fine... I guess I stepped over the line. I was just curious, is all."

He leaned against the couch, looking at me. "Why are you so curious?" He asked, "what difference does it make, it isn't like finding out more is going to help either of us in any way."

I shrugged, "I'm just curious... and I guess..." I sighed, wanting to be honest, "since you're my friend I want to know more about you."

He let out a humored huff.

"Seriously!" I exclaimed, "I mean, Ro is my best friend and we know everything about each other. That's just how friendship is. You gotta understand the person to be able to be best friends with them."

"What does knowing my past have to do with understanding me?"

"Well, I don't get it," I said, truthfully, "I don't get why you're considered an evil Pharaoh. I don't think you're evil. I mean, yeah, you're rude sometimes but being rude is not the same as being evil. I mean, my dad is a total jerk and I wouldn't call even him evil."

"I have killed innocent people, that is why I am called evil."

"Well why? Why'd you do it?" I asked, "that's why I went to do some research. You keep saying you've killed innocent people but you don't seem to be the kind of person who's done that."

He sighed, "you've got a naïve sense of reality."

I rolled my eyes and returned to looking at my computer, "well, I guess I do."

He was silent for a moment and then he surprised me when he spoke, "If you really want to know, my childhood was filled with political turmoil."

I looked back at him.

He placed one of his arms on the back of the couch and leaned his head against his hand, not looking at me as he spoke, "my father died when he was young and of course, it was unquestionable that I would become King. I was his first-born son and from the moment I was born I was destined to become king. But I had only lived for ten years when he died and so my mother ruled with me as a coregent."

"You were a child king..." I placed my computer on the coffee table and listened carefully as he spoke.

He nodded, still not looking at me.

He definitely didn't look comfortable talking about this. I wanted to ask him if he was okay. But I knew he wasn't. I mean, he always looked moody but this time around there was something different.

There was a real sadness in his eyes.

"I tried to protect her," he suddenly said.

I blinked.

Wait...

A girl?

Yes... I knew this wasn't about me at all... but I couldn't deny the sudden jealousy that filled me.

So it did have something to do with a girl he loved!

"It started because of her. Because of her and my brother."

I tried to swallow back my jealousy, reminding myself not to be selfish and also

trying to convince myself that I did not have a thing for this guy. "What did?"

He let out a breath and shook his head, "no. I can't put the blame on them for my mistakes."

"Atem, what are you talking about." I wanted him to clarify. Who was this girl? Was he in love with her?

Now he looked at me, "you're always asking me why I... why I was... cruel," he started with a small smirk on his face, "to be honest, I never really thought of myself as cruel. I imagined I was being strict and harsh and frightening. That was what I wanted to be. Not... cruel. But at some point it just started to get out of hand and I let it continue."

I hesitated, "and then the guy cursed you?"

He nodded.

"But why... why did you want to be so strict and harsh and frightening? Why did you feel like you had to protect those two people?"

"Being a king is not easy," he said, letting out a small laugh that had little to no humor in it, "I'm sure it's not nearly as difficult as living in poverty but nonetheless, the mental strain that is put on you... especially if you are a child king... it is horrendous."

I let out a breath. He's never been so emotional around me... it really made me feel like he trusted me.

Neferkiti came out of nowhere right then and jumped onto Atem's lap, as if wanting to comfort him. Atem began to run his fingers through her fur before he continued, "let me start again," he said before taking a breath. "My father was a good man. He was very loving and very kind but he died well before his time... But during his life he had three wives, but my mother was his favourite. My mother was not only his first wife but also the wife he married out of love. He loved her since they were children and she was his principle queen.

"But then there were two others. The third one was the mother of Khamenatem. The only brother of mine who I really loved and cared for. My father married his mother out of courtesy to his deceased vizier, but he loved her too since she was

such a caring woman. However, she died early because she was murdered. Only a year after my father died."

I narrowed my eyes, starting to sense some conspiracy theory kind of story.

"When my father died, I had all the rights to the throne. Nothing in the laws was against me becoming King. So I became King. But again, because I was so young, my mother ruled beside me as my co-regent. I couldn't be king on my own at that age.

"However, my father's second wife also had a son who she wanted to see on the throne. He, however, had absolutely no claim to the throne. Not only was he not the first-born son but he was also the son of a foreigner. My father's second wife was a foreigner who was married to him purely for political reasons. And in Egyptian law, foreigners have absolutely no claim to the throne. This rule was there to protect Egypt from foreigners trying to claim Egypt. Which was exactly what the Hittites wanted.

"The only possibly way for her son to become King was if everyone in my mother's side of the family and Khamenatem's side were dead. Both sons and daughters and brothers and sisters. Everyone."

I took a deep breath, started to see where this was going.

"As you can imagine, my childhood years were filled with problems. The family of my father's second wife worked hard to get rid of any of their opponents and this continued for six years. Many of my relatives were murdered, including Khamenatem's mother. Some were even murdered right before my eyes."

"Oh my gosh..."

"My mother was almost assassinated twice and the third time was right in front of me. They shot an arrow at her and I saw it in time. I saved her but took the hit instead," he touched his left side of his abdomen as he spoke and to be honest, I had remembered seeing a strange looking scar there before, "and it was after that when I had officially had enough of all of this."

I swallowed back the nervousness that was filling me. So it wasn't a girl he was in love with after all... it was his mother.

"I was sixteen when I ordered the capture and execution of every single member of the second wife's family that was in Egypt. Every single one of them except for herself and her son."

One of my hands went over my mouth in shock.

"The only reason I didn't kill them was because their murder would probably lead to war. So I sent the both of them to a prison. They became my hostages. And they became the example across the nations of what happened when you crossed the new Pharaoh. However old he was."

I had no idea what to say.

"And that was it," he continued after a short shrug, "after that my life changed. My mother was horrified with my actions despite the fact that I did it to protect her and then my relationship with her grew distant. My brother was thankful... but frightened, nonetheless. In fact, everyone was frightened. Everyone was terrified of me. I was a different person. And I allowed it to continue that way."

I let out the breath I was holding as he looked at me.

"Does that answer your question?" He asked, "I tried to be as detailed as possible."

I nodded, "yeah. You've thoroughly answered my question."

And then we didn't talk for the rest of the evening.

I couldn't sleep. I mean, how could I after I literally found out all the answers to almost every question I've been asking myself about Atem since I met him.

And gosh... did I feel bad.

He was ten when he became king... when all of this nonsense started to happen to him. How horrible.

When I was ten, I went to school, had fun and came home to spend the evening watching T.V. and doing the very simple homework that I always had.

I made bracelets, coloured pictures, rode my bike, hung out with friends, read books and just did what kids are supposed to do.

And he was trying to rule a country while his stepmother was trying to kill him and his family.

I couldn't blame him for how he was now. I couldn't blame him for being so cold and mean. How could I expect him to be any different?

I mean, he saw his mother almost get murdered not once, but twice!

Twice!

I think I was going to cry. I swallowed back my tears as I was lying down on my bed, staring at the ceiling, just thinking.

The poor guy.

Aunty Maya was right. He was just a lonely guy who messed up a little here and there. The story was twisted. Atem wasn't evil.

There was no such thing as just evil.

And this whole curse... it was all a mistake. That wizard had no idea what he was doing. That had to be it, right? Would the gods really want to punish someone who was just troubled?

And if the gods really were the ones that punished him... why would they listen to his mother's prayers and go easy on him? I mean, if that was what really happened, that is.

It just didn't make any sense.

And though Atem answered all my questions, I couldn't help but feel that I was more confused than ever.

But one thing is for certain, I thought as I sat up, Atem really had it rough... and I can't blame him for the way he acts.

He really did just need a friend. He was a lonely guy who had a difficult life.

I got up from my bed and started to make my way out of my room. It was just past midnight and I kind of thought Atem would be sleeping.

But when I left my room and peeked into his, he wasn't.

I closed the door and walked into the living room, only then feeling the chill coming in from the open balcony. He was standing there, wearing only his scarf, looking at the sky.

Without thinking much about it, I walked over to him, stepping out onto the cold cement of the balcony and closing my eyes before I wrapped my arms around his waist, surprising him.

"W-what are you doing?" He asked, almost immediately trying to pry my arms off of him.

But I didn't let him.

I pressed my face into his back, "just shut up and let me hug you, you big idiot."

He hesitated, but let go of my hands. "What are you doing?" He repeated.

"I'm so sorry that all that stuff happened to you, Atem."

"Why are you apologizing?" His voice lacked any emotion, "You had nothing to do with it."

"But still... someone needs to apologize to you so I will."

"Don't be a fool... what..." He straightened himself up and started tugging at my arm, trying to pull me in front of him, "Are you..."

I was crying.

Oh goodness was I a wuss.

My tears soaked his shirt until he finally pulled me off and got me to stand in front of him, "why are you crying."

I wiped my tears, embarrassed, but unable to make them stop, "I dunno," I said, though it followed with a hiccup, "I just... I dunno."

He narrowed his eyes and then shook his head, "you have no reason to—"

I hugged him again, this time from the front, soaking the front of his shirt with my tears now.

And suddenly, I felt him relax. He placed one arm around me and the other patted the back of my head. "You do not need to feel sorry for me."

I didn't say anything.

"I have gotten over it already, a long time ago. Trust me, I don't need your sympathy."

That didn't help to soothe my crying, but to my surprise, he stood there and just kept patting my head, trying to make me stop.

When I finally started to settle down, I sniffled and loosened up my hug a bit.

And then Atem sighed.

"What's wrong with you?" He asked, rather softly, "I should be the one crying, you fool."

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 17 - [Beauty and the Holiday Celebrations]

Atem didn't join me to read that night, I assumed it was because of the awkward situation I put him in. Or the fact that in the morning, he probably woke up in my bed going like 'what the flip.'

But whatever the case, I didn't read that night anyways, I went straight to bed with burning, red eyes and fell fast asleep pretty quickly.

The next day, I went to work with Atem. Grandma Seetha's shop had these famous Christmas themed sugar cookies that sell fast, so she needed our help to bake *a lot*.

I personally loved sugar cookies, making them *and* eating them, so I enjoyed myself though I did spend most of my time making cakes instead. My grandma had the special touch, you see. No one could make and ice the sugar cookies as well and as beautifully as she could. So I worked on the cakes that needed to be made while she made the cookies. Atem helped with packing them in nice boxes and with the simple things. He seemed to like the cookies too, though he wasn't keen on eating more than one at a time.

I had come to learn after all these months that he didn't exactly have a great sweet tooth. He tolerated sweets but never, ever ate too much.

Weird.

Though, I must add, he *loved* honey. He would eat honey for the rest of his days if I let him.

This went on for the next couple days, we even worked on Christmas Eve. However, I didn't always stay all the time since I was hanging out with my

brother whenever he got the chance. But usually, I would come straight back to Grandma Seetha's and help her out. And after making probably over like, five thousand sugar cookies, Grandma Seetha let us go home around noon on Christmas Eve with a batch of fifty of her famous sugar cookies.

As Atem and I walked home, he looked out at the busy streets, "there are more people out than usual."

I nodded, "well, tomorrow is Christmas, everyone's probably trying to get some last minute stuff done."

"What kind of stuff?"

"Probably present shopping and stuff," I said as I stopped walking. We were right outside a candy shop and inside I could see some deliciously awesome looking gingerbread houses that were for sale.

I loved gingerbread anything.

"Hold on a sec," I said to him with a smile, "I'm going to go buy one of those, wait here."

He nodded, not really wanting to go into a store filled with sweet stuff. And I knew this for sure because after the first time he came in here with me, he never followed me in again.

I just assumed it was because of the overwhelming amount of sugar.

It was twenty-five dollars but it was a pretty nice gingerbread house, so I thought it was worth the money and bought it before I could decide that it was a bad idea.

And just as I walked out, I was surprised by a random, pretty girl stopping in front of Atem and kissing him on the cheek.

He jerked his head back quickly, looking at her in confusion as she giggled and walked away with her friends.

Almost instantly, my entire body was filled with jealousy as I watched Atem touch his cheek with his hand.

"What are you doing?" I pretty much hissed.

He turned and looked at me, "she just..."

I shoved the gingerbread house into his arms, "hold this."

"I am already holding the cookies—"

"Well your hands were free enough to let her kiss your cheek so I'm sure you can hold the gingerbread house!"

"What are you fussing about?" Atem argued, "I'm the one who was just kissed by a stranger!"

"I'm not fussing!" I started to march off, "you can do whatever you want!"

I heard Atem groan as he struggled to pick up the boxes of sugar cookies that he put on the floor and then I felt bad so I rolled my eyes and started to walk back, "fine, I'll—" And I cut myself off and froze in my spot as I noticed why the girl had kissed him.

Mistletoe.

The candy shop had mistletoe outside its window.

I sighed before I walked over and grabbed the gingerbread house from him, and just as he was about to say something, I heard some guy shout from across the street.

Atem and I turned and looked at this stranger who had his hands around his mouth to project his voice: "kiss her!"

A shudder ran through my body as I giggled nervously and felt my cheeks warm up.

"What did he say?" Atem asked, "is he talking to us."

"No, no," I said quickly, "let's go."

And as we walked off, I heard the guy yell, "aww man, c'mon!" before he and his friends laughed.

I sighed in relief.

"What's wrong with all these people?" Atem asked, probably still confused over the kiss.

I didn't respond.

And right then, I was surprised by a man walking out of an alleyway.

I bumped right into him, almost crushing the gingerbread house in between us, "I'm so—" I cut myself off when I saw that guy's face.

He was a tall, handsome, fair skinned guy with really light brown eyes. He wore a heavy coat and a hat but he looked so familiar.

"I'm sorry," his voice was deep... and it too was so familiar.

I took a step back, "uh..." he was totally staring at me and I didn't exactly feel very comfortable with that.

And after a moment, he smiled and walked off, but only after glancing over at Atem.

Atem watched the guy go too and once he was a safe distance away, I let out a huff, "that was weird."

Atem continued to watch him for a moment longer before starting to walk again.

When I wasn't following him right away, Atem turned around, "what's wrong?"

"I'm trying to figure out who that guy is..." I said, starting to walk, "he looks so familiar..."

Atem narrowed his eyes but before he could say anything, my phone began ringing. It was Aurora.

When I picked up, she begged me to come over and help her with some last minute wrapping. I agreed, I loved wrapping, after all.

So I almost immediately forgot about that guy and after dropping Atem, the gingerbread house and the cookies off, I got into my brother's car and drove

carefully to her place. I wasn't particularly a good driver in the winter, so it took me an extra five minutes to get there since I was driving so slow.

But that was fine.

She had a lot of tiny presents that she was going to have to deliver to her family in the next hour, so I sat down with her in her living room and wrapped them all with her.

"What's up with you?" She suddenly asked a couple minutes into wrapping.

I looked up at her, "hmm?"

"You look deep in thought."

I smiled, "aren't I always?"

She let out a short laugh, "I guess so, but seriously, May, you can't be mad at Atem, he had no idea—"

My head shot up, " what! No! I'm not mad! Trust me! I was just shocked and—"

Ro laughed, "just playing, relax."

I bit my lip, and after a moment, I pushed away the Mistletoe thing and started to think of what Atem had told me a while back. And then I sighed. It was so weird how Aurora just knew these kinds of things... she knew there was something I wasn't telling her. Of course, Atem's story had been in the back of my mind ever since he told me about it. The mistletoe thing kind of made me forget about it for a second, but now it came right back.

And I could tell by the silence that Ro was just waiting for me to spill it.

But I guess that's what a best friend is, right?

I sighed, "Atem told me... about what happened to him."

She looked at me.

"I went to the library a few days ago and did some research on him. When I went home and asked him, he wasn't too happy about that but told me everything

anyways."

"Was it rough?"

I nodded, "real rough."

"Man..."

"It's kind of like Cinderella, you know? An evil step mom who wants to ruin your life? Except he had two and one was cool but the other was messed up. She killed a lot of people and it really... well, she's the reason he started being 'cruel' and stuff." I air-quoted cruel.

Ro raised an eyebrow, "first Beauty and the Beast, now Cinderella?"

"Beauty and the Beast?" I felt my cheeks heat up.

She chuckled, "so what happened after he told you?" I wasn't entirely sure how much of this Atem thing Ro believed. I mean, she told me that she'll believe it since I do, but if she finds out that it was all one big lie, she wouldn't be surprised. I couldn't blame her though. I mean, it took the red-eyed guy trying to kill me to convince me, and after what Atem did to him, I'm sure he wouldn't be coming back to try and convince her too.

"I became a big baby and cried for him," I placed a hand on my face, "god was it embarrassing."

"That's so you, you loser," Ro smiled as she got back to wrapping, "worrying about other people's problems and all."

"But..." I lowered my voice to a whisper, "I kinda hugged him."

Aurora continued to pack with a straight face, "Girl, I am *not* surprised."

My cheeks got warmer.

Now she looked at me with a funny smile, "the question now is did he hug you back?"

I shrugged, looking down as I taped down the wrapping paper onto the box,

"kinda sorta, I guess. I wouldn't call it a hug. It wasn't particularly romantic or anything though. I mean, it was freezing cold and I got snot all over his shirt. And trust me, he complained about that the entire time."

Aurora laughed, "oh my goodness, you are too adorable."

I looked at her with a smile.

"So, you *wanted* it to be romantic, huh?"

Now I rolled my eyes.

"May," she started, "there's nothing wrong with having a crush. Why are you in denial? You've never been in denial before with like, Blake and Dom."

I simply shrugged.

"And with this guy, I can't blame you either. He's tall, dark and mysterious *and* he lives with you. Not to mention he's hot as hell. That jawline," she shook her head as she probably imagined it, "it's hell-a nice."

I chuckled now.

"If I wasn't dating Alec and totally head over heels for him, I'd definitely be trying to jump Atem's bones—"

"Ro!" I threw the tape roll at her but giggled.

She grinned at me, "it's true though. I don't blame you for having a crush on him. Besides, yeah there's all that physical, unimportant stuff... but to you, you've got some sort of deeper understanding of him and clearly you like whatever it is you understand about him."

I looked at her and then sighed, "I don't know," I started, "hopefully it starts to make sense to me eventually."

"It will," Ro smiled, "promise. But for now, are you doing anything special tonight?"

I shook my head, "just going to be at home."

"Well how about you, me, Alec and Atem celebrate Christmas together? It'd be nice and cozy! Alec and I can come over to your place tonight and we'll sleepover!"

I started to grin, "oh my gosh! That'd be so much fun! We can open presents together in the morning!"

"So it's a date?"

"Um, yeah!"

So after helping Ro wrap her stuff up, I went home and started to prepare for the sleepover.

I was super excited.

Atem didn't seem thrilled, but didn't seem to mind the idea. He rather liked Alec and Ro. His concern, however, was how everyone was going to fit in my tiny apartment.

The plan was, Atem could stay in his room, Ro and Alec could use mine and I'd use the couch. I'd slept on it once before and I guess a second time wouldn't be too bad, so long as I had a nice cozy blanket and a fluffy pillow.

And right when I was finished sweeping the place up, Ro and Alec had arrived. They brought their gifts, stuffing it under the tree with Atem's and mine.

We didn't do anything special, we ate cookies and a nice warm meal that Ro and I made together while Alec taught Atem how to play the videogames he brought with him.

And after eating, Ro suggested we watch a movie.

"Any movie you have in mind?" I asked as I looked through my not so vast DVD collection.

"Yeah," I could hear the smile in her voice, "I have a great idea."

I looked at her.

She was sitting on the floor with Alec, leaning against the couch, a blanket over the two of them. We moved the coffee table out of the way so we could stretch out our legs and watch a movie in peace, but Atem preferred to sit on the couch.

"Let's watch Beauty and the Beast," she said with a grin.

I felt my cheeks warm up slightly, knowing exactly why she picked that movie.

"An animation?" Alec questioned, "why—"

Ro jabbed her elbow into his ribs, shutting him up.

"What is this movie about?" Atem asked, his elbow on the arm of the couch while he held his face up with his hand.

"It's about a Prince," I started as I pulled the movie out of my box of DVDs and started to put it into the player, "who is cursed and turned into a beast. And a girl who he holds hostage but later falls in love with."

After I put the movie in, I crawled over to the spot on the floor next to Ro, not looking at Atem's surprised face.

"I think you'll like it," Ro said to Atem, "you'll probably be able to relate real well."

Atem let out a huff before I pressed play.

To be honest, Beauty and the Beast was my absolute favourite Disney Movie, Lilo and Stitch coming in second place. So I actually had no problem with watching that movie even though I've watched it a million times.

But the only reason why this was awkward was because deep down I did know that this story was in fact quite similar to what Atem and I were going through.

I mean, a prince who was cursed for being mean? Well, Atem's a King but same thing.

A girl who has to deal with it and help him out. Yeah, there were similarities with that too.

But that wasn't the awkward part.

The awkward part was that in *Beauty and the Beast*, the only way the Beast could break the curse was to get someone to fall in love with him.

I blushed at the thought of that before I blinked the craziness away and forced myself to watch this amazing movie in peace.

And after an hour and a half of cartoon awesomeness, beautiful songs and a heart fluttering filled ending, the movie was over.

Ro immediately turned to Atem, "what'd you think?"

He shrugged, "it was entertaining, I guess. The music was good. I rather liked that song with the furniture and other household objects."

I chuckled but Ro continued, "wouldn't it be super hilarious if your curse would be broken by finding true love?"

I felt my cheeks heat up slightly as I looked at Ro, trying to use my eyes to tell her to stop.

Atem just looked at her, as if considering the thought.

"I dunno," Alec suddenly chimed in, "I think it'd be pretty sad."

Everyone looked at him now.

"I mean, breaking the curse for Atem would mean sending him back to Ancient Egypt. If he fell in love and the curse was broken, that would be pretty sad, right? He and his true love would be split up."

We all thought about that and Ro nodded, "you're right. That would be horrible," she then turned to him, "you wouldn't want to break a pretty lady's heart, now would you?"

Atem let out a short laugh, "that's hardly any of *my* concern."

Ro laughed too, then she stood up, pulling the blanket off of Alec as she did so, "I'm going to bed. I don't want Santa to skip our house cause I'm awake now, do

I?"

I looked at Ro, "but it's only, like, eleven-thirty or something!"

She yawned, "long day, princess."

Alec stood up too, "I guess that means I'm going to bed too," he then looked at me, "May, I really don't mind taking the couch, you and Ro can take your bed—"

I waved my hand, cutting him off, "trust me, don't worry about it. I'm totally cool with the couch. Besides, sleeping in front of the Christmas tree is always nice."

Alec smiled, "alright, thanks."

"Goodnight!"

Ro bent over and kissed my cheek, "goodnight, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite."

I chuckled.

And with that, Alec and Ro disappeared into my bedroom.

The lights were still off from the movie so the living room was dark aside from the lights of the beautiful Christmas tree and that stood next to the T.V.

Neferkiti was snuggled up into a ball next to me and I ran my fingers through her fur before turning to Atem, who was sitting on the couch, "are you going to bed now, too?"

He surprised me by getting up and then sitting back down on the floor next to me, "I'm not tired."

"Neither am I."

"But from what I remember, this Christmas tradition does call for sleeping early, does it not? Or else the fat man in red, I forget his name, won't come."

I chuckled, "yeah, it does. But unfortunately, the fat man in red isn't real."

Atem looked at me, "your world has no magic, it's boring."

"And your world did?"

"If it didn't, I wouldn't be here."

I nodded. True. He got me there. "But it's funny..." I started, "even though you're the living proof that magic is real... I still have trouble believing in that kind of stuff."

He crossed his legs, "so you find it highly unlikely that falling in love would break my curse."

I chuckled again, "honestly, if it has anything to do with you, I don't even know."

"Maybe I should find that girl who kissed me earlier and test it on her. Clearly she must have been interested in me to have tried something like that."

I looked at him with disapproval, and when he looked back at me, he shrugged, "I was only joking."

"Joking?" I looked down at Neferkiti, "I think this is the first time I've heard you joke since I met you."

"Not true, I *have* made jokes before."

"Mhmm."

"Why *did* she kiss me anyways?"

"Mistletoe."

"Mistle-what?"

"Mistletoe," I repeated, turning to him again, "it's a Christmas tradition. If two people are standing under the Mistletoe, which is this plant thing-y, then they're supposed to kiss."

"Ah," Atem simply said, "I was wondering what that hideous thing above my head was."

I smiled. Leave it to Atem to toss aside such a famous, loved tradition. "Yeah,

"that was mistletoe."

"Quite a stupid tradition if you ask me."

"I dunno, I think it's rather romantic. You should read all the stories where the main characters have their first kisses under the mistletoe."

He crossed his arms and closed his eyes, "stupid."

"You're stupid," I countered, childishly.

"You should trick Blake into standing under it with you," Atem suddenly suggested, "in fact, I think that's a brilliant idea."

I nudged him hard, feeling my cheeks burning, "I..."

He looked at me, "no, I'm serious—"

"I'm not interested in Blake that way anymore!" I blurted.

Surprise covered his face, "what?"

I shrugged, "I love him as a friend, and that's about it."

Atem rolled his eyes, "you are a real piece of work, aren't you."

"What's that supposed to mean?" I glared as I said it.

"It's a different man every month for you, isn't it?"

I punched him in the arm, making him wince and scowl at me as he rubbed the spot with his hand, "you are angry because I'm right."

"No!" I argued, "I'm angry cause you're a jerk. It wasn't like I was in love with him or anything! I just had a crush on him!"

"Whatever you say."

"Just give it a rest, will you?"

"It's nothing to me," Atem said, "you're the one who's going to have to deal with

this for the rest of your life."

I punched his arm again, "being romantically indecisive is better than being a jerk."

"Whatever you say."

I rolled my eyes and groaned, "go to sleep, Atem."

He got up and left.

I sighed, picked up the sleeping Neferkiti and put her on my lap, "you're the only one who truly understands me," I whispered as I pet her.

And just as I dropped my head back onto the seat of the couch, I heard Atem's footsteps again.

When I opened my eyes and looked towards the hallway where the bedrooms were, he was standing there with a frown on my face, "is it Christmas morning yet?"

I rolled my eyes but looked at the time, "yeah, I guess. Merry Christmas." It was twelve-o-three in the morning.

He walked over to the fridge and opened it up. For a moment, he disappeared behind the kitchen's island as he knelt down to grab something, then he appeared again, closed the fridge and then walked over to me, a plastic bag in his hands.

He sat down next to me again. I tried to think of something witty but he pulled a box out of the bag and opened it up.

In it was a bunch of bite-sized balls. They were golden in colour and kind of gooey looking.

"What..."

"Try one."

I looked at him, "what is it?"

"Just try one," he pushed the box closer to me, "hurry up."

I hesitated.

"Come on."

I reached into the box and picked out one of the gooey balls.

It smelled rather decent and it kinda looked like a timbit, so I took a bite into it.

It wasn't a soft, cake-y timbit. Instead, it was soft, but kind crispy. Once I bit in, a tiny bit of honey started to drip out and I had to catch it with my hand before it dripped onto my PJs and Neferkiti.

I chewed.

And swallowed.

And well... it was pretty good!

"What is it?" I asked again.

"Do you like it?"

"It's great! Really sweet, but great!"

He was smiling.

"Are you going to tell me what it is?"

"My people simply call them honey balls, but there are raisins in it and sometimes nuts but I do not like them with nuts."

"Did you make these?" I asked, shocked.

He nodded, "Grandma Seetha helped a little bit. But *I* did most of the work," he said proudly, "today, while you were working on that big cake."

I took out another one, "these are fantastic, Atem."

"Since I misunderstood the Christmas tradition and gave you the bicycle early, I thought of making these as a gift for you to have on Christmas day."

I chuckled, "well, you still got it kind of wrong, we're supposed to sleep, wake up and then open presents."

He rolled his eyes, "whatever."

I smiled, "I didn't know a Pharaoh could cook."

"My mother used to make these right in front of me when I was young. So I remembered."

"Good for you," I said, eating another, "you know, we could ask Grandma Seetha to sell these! They're really good."

"You think so?"

I nodded and looked at him, "you could make them yourselves."

"I think we should bring this up to Grandma Seetha."

I watched his pleased looking face for a moment before giving him a light nudge, "you can be such a sweetheart, you know?"

"A what?"

"A sweetheart."

If he didn't know what that meant before, he figured it out on his own as I picked out another one and started eating, "no," he said, "I'm just paying my debts."

"Mhmm."

"It's true."

"Mhmm," I swallowed the treat and decided that was enough sugar for one night. After licking my fingers, I helped him close the box and put it aside, "they were delicious. Thank you, Atem."

He nodded his head, "So," he started, "what did you get me?"

I laughed and rolled my eyes, "you can wait till the morning."

I could see that he was biting the inside of his cheek, "well, it better be good."

"They are, trust me. I think you'll like them."

"Good," he said, "how long must I wait?"

"Go to sleep, doofus," I said as I let my head drop onto his shoulder.

I felt him twitch slightly, but he didn't move, which made my heartbeat rise.

He was silent for a moment but then he spoke up, "I never imagined friendship to be like this."

"Like what," I asked as I closed my eyes.

"Arguing and fighting one second and then being friendly the next."

I chuckled, "to be honest, I never imagined friendship to be like that either."

"So it's not normally like this?"

"Nope."

"You and Aurora don't fight?"

"We argue, sometimes, but never to the extent that you and I argue."

"Hmm."

We were quiet for a moment.

And then I was curious so I decided to ask a question, "do you have a problem with our version of friendship?"

He didn't answer right away but when he did, I smiled.

"No."

I didn't know when I fell asleep, but when I woke up the next morning I found

myself in Atem's bed.

I had a mini panic attack, wondering how the hell I got here.

But evidence, such as the fact that his bed was really small and the fact that Neferkiti was also sleeping next to me, seemed to suggest that Atem was *not* in the bed with me.

So I calmed down and turned in the bed without waking Neferkiti.

The bed smelled exactly like him and I took a deep breath, enjoying the scent.

I wondered for a moment why he always smelled so good. I knew he didn't wear cologne, since I'd have to be the one buying it for him. And he did wear deodorant but this wasn't the smell of deodorant.

And then I remembered reading somewhere that if you liked the way someone else's body odor smelled then that meant you'd probably meant you'd make genetically awesome kids together.

I shook my head vigorously.

What.

What the hell was I thinking?

That's gross.

I got up quickly and made my way into the bathroom.

After brushing my teeth really well, since I was worried about cavities after eating all those sweets last night and not brushing before I fell asleep, I took a quick shower, put on some comfy house clothes and then left to the kitchen.

Only to find out that everyone was already awake.

"Good morning and Merry Christmas, sleepyhead!" Ro grinned from where she was sitting at the island in the kitchen, "Alec's making breakfast."

It was only nine in the morning and Ro was totally someone who slept in all the time, so I was surprised to see her up! I guess it was the Christmas excitement.

"Merry Christmas!" I smiled as I walked over to her.

"Merry Christmas, May." Alec grinned when he saw me.

"Thanks! You too!"

Before I sat down, I saw Atem sitting at the couch, playing another one of those videogames that Alec brought over.

Boys will be boys, I guess, ancient or not.

"Atem was quite the gentleman for letting you sleep in his bed while he took the couch, huh?" Ro said with a wink.

I hesitated, turning around in my seat to look at him, "he slept on the couch?"

Ro nodded.

And I smiled.

That *was* nice of him.

Alec made us a full, amazing breakfast with some delicious eggs, blueberry pancakes, a couple sausages and a little bit of bacon.

Atem *loved* it and criticized me for not making him such amazing breakfasts, but despite the rudeness, I thanked Alec.

After breakfast, we all sat around the Christmas tree and opened our presents.

Of course, I had no presents from Atem under the tree since he already gave them to me, but he definitely had a bunch from me.

The first, and main part of his gift was a pair of gold plated ankh studs for his ears.

I had this weird dislike of ears that had holes in them with no earrings. And since the earrings that came with Atem when he first got here were *massive* there was no way he'd be wearing those around.

And so, for the past seven or so months, I did not like that there were no earrings

in his ear holes.

Which is why I got him the ankh earrings.

And he *loved* them.

He put them in his earholes almost immediately and I think they looked great on him.

Most of my gifts were Egyptian themed... I guess I was trying to make him feel more connected to who he really was. And these gifts included a couple huge history books on Ancient Egypt, some statues of Egyptian gods and stuff to decorate his room with, a poster of Ma'at, and a couple other things.

Thankfully, he liked all of them.

Alec and Ro also got Atem a couple gifts. The first was a watch, which I thought was extremely generous of them. And the second was a bunch of storybooks.

He loved those too.

Blake and my brother surprisingly joined us a little later with gifts as well.

Though my brother didn't get Atem anything.

But still, overall, a great time was had by all!

So Christmas came and went real fast, but that was fine. I had a lot of fun and I knew it just had to get more fun from this point on.

I mean, New Years was next on the list and aside from the fact that New Years day meant fireworks, and I *loved* fireworks, part of Ro's huge Christmas gift for me were a two tickets to Oakville universities winter formal.

She really wanted me to go but I thought I couldn't since I couldn't afford the sixty-five dollar tickets. So her and Alec pitched in money to get me a pair. Well, one for me and one for Atem.

Ro was all about making the best of our first year in University and everyone

told us that the winter formal was always super fun. I really *did* want to go to see what it was all about, so I was super thrilled to get the tickets as a gift.

Whether Atem was going to like it or not, I dunno.

But still, I knew *I* was going to have fun.

Now.

Back to New Years.

I had to explain to Atem what New Years was to us, but his people had a similar celebration for their New Year so he didn't have too much of a problem understanding it.

What he *did* find confusing was my description of fireworks.

I couldn't blame him though. I really had no idea how fireworks worked, so I just told him they were colorful explosions in the sky.

When New Years night came, I popped up a bag of popcorn and Atem and I waited on the balcony for midnight.

"I'm rather intrigued by the idea of explosions in the sky," Atem said.

"Wait till you see them," I said as I tightened the scarf around my neck. It was a really chilly night but what could be done? We *had* to see the fireworks. "Did you come up with your New Years resolutions yet?"

"What?"

"New Years Resolutions. They're things you want to change or do better for the New Years. It's something that people do every New Years."

He snorted, "no thank you."

"Why not?" I asked, "you could make a resolution like, make sure you be nicer—"

"I'm already nicer. Don't you think?"

I guess he had a point.

"What about you? What is your New Years resolution?"

I smiled, "I gave up on making those. I never ever actually go through with them. Last year it was to lose five pounds... I started exercising but gave up three days in—"

"Why were you trying to lose weight?"

Oh gosh, was he gonna pull that, 'nah, you're fine as you are' stunt? "Well, I kind of have a little bit of a muffin top going and a year ago it really bothered me. I don't really care so much anymore though."

Atem watched me for a moment before smirking, "well, I think you should care. I don't know what a muffin top is but I have noticed that you've got extra weight going on over here," he used his finger to poke my waist before I smacked it away and scoffed.

"Jerk!" Though I shouldn't have been surprised.

His smirk grew, "I'm just kidding."

I crossed my arms, "yeah right. And what's up with you? You seriously like to joke around a lot these days, don't you?"

He shrugged, and just as he did a loud boom was heard and Atem flinched pretty bad.

I started to grin, jumping up and down and pointing at the sky, "look! Look! Look!"

He turned and looked at the sky and the beautiful fireworks show began.

Atem's eyes widened as the noisy but gorgeous fireworks lit the sky.

All the people on the streets below us had frozen in their spots too, shouting "Happy New Year!" to each other as they too watched the show.

After watching the beautiful lights for a few seconds, I looked at Atem.

He had pure amazement on his face, which kind of reminded me of the night he saw snow for the first time. And strangely enough, watching the awe and amazement on his face was much more entertaining than the fireworks show itself.



Chapter 18 - [Beauty and the Cheek Kiss]

Hey everyone!!

PLEASE READ THIS!

I'm so sorry for the late update! It was my first week back to school AND I had a crazy thing happen to me but I thought I'd use my experience to send out an important message to you all.

Somehow, someone managed to get a hold of my credit card information and charged about \$2000 to my account. Thankfully I noticed this immediately and was able to contact my bank and sort it out right away, but it was still a super scary thing, especially since I'm a broke university student (just like May [and all the other university students, I'm sure], haha!)

Prior to this happening, I, like most people, assumed this kind of thing would never happen to me. But it did! And I just want to make sure all of you are extra safe with your money, whether it's in a credit card or not.

So here are some tips that I read online which are simple, but will help you stay safe:

- 1) Make sure you keep your pin safe and hidden every time you use your card (even if people aren't there, I read on my bank website that people use tiny cameras to steal pin codes)**
- 2) Don't use your card at any suspicious ATMs, ever! If you're even slightly suspicious, it's better to be safe than sorry!**
- 3) If you lose your card or it's stolen, report it right away, and make sure you keep your money or cards in a place you won't forget about, so you**

know right away if it's missing or not.

4) Also, check your transactions etc, as often as possible! And if you notice something strange, report it. Thankfully, I always triple check my transactions online whenever I purchase stuff which is why I noticed the missing \$2000.

After this happened, I found out how smart and conniving (lol) these scammers are. It's hard to believe but it's true! If you have a tapping function on your card they can literally hold a machine at near your bag and get access to all your credit card info! And money is important and must be kept safe, especially if you're broke like me and every cent counts (so I can buy myself coffee and keep myself up while I write essays for my classes and stuff LOLL)!

Anyhoo, just wanted to make sure I could use my experience to help others XD!

Again, I'm so sorry for the late upload! I hope you enjoy it. There's finally some awesome action going on between the two so I hope you like it!!

**Love,
Luckycharms! <3**

P.S. As you may have noticed, I have changed the cover of this story! I wanted the cover to have a little bit more of a modern air to it, which is why I picked a picture of that Las Vegas pyramid thing (LOL) Hope you guys like it and see where I was going with it! HAHA =)



Within the next couple days I was back at school. I was kind of disappointed with the fact that I had to go back, but not for the expected reason.

As much as I hated to admit it... going back to school meant spending less time with Atem. And I was starting to really enjoy my time with him.

But anyways, it couldn't be helped.

As a strong, independent and intelligent woman, I knew that my education came before boys.

Oh, and remember that boy that I bumped into on Christmas Eve? The one that looked so familiar but I couldn't put my finger on who he really was? Well, I figured it out.

He was a student at my school. And he was actually in one of my classes this semester.

I must have seen him walking around here and there which was why I recognized him.

Surprisingly enough, during the first tutorial for the class, he sat right next to me it was kinda weird.

I ended up having to be partners with him for this project we had to do for the class.

But there wasn't exactly a problem with that. His name was Julian and he seemed like a cool guy. He even has an accent... though I will admit I had no idea what accent it was.

Now, aside from school, that Winter Formal was coming up. It was on the first Friday of the school semester so it came quickly.

Since Ro bought tickets for Atem too, I needed to make sure he had something to wear. Unfortunately we were expected to wear pretty formal clothes. So my options were either to buy him something or borrow from a friend.

So I asked Blake.

Blake and Atem were practically the same size and Blake was cool, so he had no problem lending me a pair of dress pants and a fancy red shirt.

I wore an orange knee length dress that I bought years ago but also wore dark pantyhose underneath cause it was freezing outside. I did my hair and my makeup and we were ready by five-thirty.

Alec was going to drive us, though it wasn't very far at all, so he picked us up and we were off.

The formal itself didn't seem as exciting as I hoped it would be. It was pretty much like prom with pretty decorations, a small show and then food and dancing.

And as soon as the music started blasting, I saw a distressed look on Atem's face. He hated really loud places. And this *was* loud, the music boomed so loudly that we'd feel it in our bones.

But Ro didn't waste a second. She grabbed my arm and dragged me into the dance floor without a single hesitation.

Thankfully, Alec wasn't too fond of clubbing kind of dancing, so he kept Atem company at our table.

I was a lot like Alec in the sense that I wasn't particularly fond of clubbing style dancing. But I had to admit, dancing with Ro and her silliness was always fun.

And after dancing for some time, we decided to take a break, and while we walked to our table I noticed that Alec was gone and Sunny had taken his spot.

I didn't even know Sunny was going to be at Winter Formal, though I should have expected it. So it was a pleasant surprise until I realized she was probably flirting with Atem.

"Hey!" Ro smiled at Sunny and I waved with a smile. Sunny grinned, "hey girls!"

"Alec went to use the washroom," Atem said before we even asked the question.

"Oh, okay great," Ro didn't seem bothered as she grabbed a glass of water and gulped it right down.

For the short amount of time that Alec was gone, I avoided Sunny's flirting by talking to Ro.

Then Alec returned, Ro and I went back to dancing, and conveniently Ro dragged Sunny with us too.

And after a few more hours, (yes, I said hours) I returned to the table, pooped.

Alec and Atem were enjoying themselves by drinking a little and talking about who knows what.

But when I got there, Atem looked at me, "are you done?" He had to shout it for me to hear.

I let out a small laugh, "I think. I'm way too exhausted to dance anymore." Besides, my feet were aching in these heels.

He said something but I didn't hear it.

"What?"

He leaned forward, his face close to mine, "Let's go home."

And immediately after he closed his mouth Ro and Sunny returned, Ro grabbed Alec, wanting to force him to dance.

"You too, Atem!" Sunny pretty much screamed, grabbing his hand.

It took me a lot of effort to hold back my pout. However, Atem pulled away his hand and instead grabbed mine, "May and I are going home."

Sunny started to frown, "no way!"

"We both have work in the morning," Atem continued.

"Awww, man!"

Atem stood up, pulling me up with him.

"Well, I'll see you all later than?" I yelled over the music. Sunny smiled a disappointed smile and Ro held her thumb up before winking.

Alec offered us a ride home, but I didn't want to bug him and Ro. Besides, our place was not too far away so I told him not to worry.

After that, Atem and I both left the hall after that and he really seemed like he wanted to hurry out of there.

Once we were out, the immediate gust of cold air actually felt good cause I was sweating like crazy. But that great feeling lasted for about a minute, and then I was shivering in my coat.

January was always the coldest month in the year.

Atem seemed to hate it too, obviously, but he sucked it up and was being a big boy.

"You know we don't have work tomorrow morning, right? It's in the afternoon?" I asked after we were a decent distance away from the hall.

Atem pulled up the collar of his coat to keep himself warm, "yes, but I hated that place. It was loud and smelly."

I laughed, not surprised. Everyone was sweating and everyone drinking and god knows what else was going on in that crowd of people grinding up against each other.

"You liked it?" Atem asked as he turned to me.

I shrugged, "I like it when Ro is there. If she's not there then it's awkward. And lots of guys at any sort of clubbing events are weird. They grab you and stuff."

He suddenly scowled.

"But Ro scares them away, which is awesome."

"Other men grabbed you?" Atem asked quickly.

I looked at him, "Well, yeah, gross right?"

He shook his head, "what is wrong with you people?"

I raised my eyebrows, "what?"

He seemed like he was holding something back.

"What?" I nudged him, "say it."

"Your people have weird interests," I could tell he was trying not to pick a fight, which was surprising, but since he was being nice, I let it go.

"Well, that's modern day life for you. Strange interests for strange people."

We stopped at a stop light and waited to cross the street while remaining silent.

My feet were killing me but I kept it to myself.

The last thing I wanted right now was for him to carry me home, which, by judging past experiences, was something he would totally do.

And when the little walking man appeared on the light and we started walking again, Atem spoke up.

"I don't know if you know this," he started, "but you look better icing cakes than you do dancing in crowds like that."

I immediately took it as an insult and snapped my head towards him to argue. But when my eyes fell on his face he had a calm expression as he kicked some snow out of the way.

He wasn't trying to insult me.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

He looked at me now, "it means that you're clearly better at making cakes compared to dancing."

Okay now he was insulting me.

As I seemed to do a lot these days, I jabbed my elbow into his ribcage and made him wince and rub the spot, "stop doing that. I'm trying to be nice."

"There's nothing nice about that, buddy."

"What I meant to say was..." He sighed, "never mind."

"No, tell me," I got my elbow ready.

He rolled his eyes and took a step away, "never mind."

"To be honest though, it didn't seem like you weren't having a good time."

"I hated it."

"You enjoyed Sunny's company?"

He snorted, "she's annoying."

I hesitated, "really?"

"I don't like girls who are *that* forward. It is *completely* obvious that she is

interested in me," he said, "I mean, I don't blame her but—"

"Oh goodness," I put a hand on my head, "you are so cocky."

"I have good reason to be."

"Oh, shut up."

And though I walked ahead and pretended I was annoyed by his cockiness, I was kind of pleased.

It was good to know that Sunny, as amazing as a girl she was, wasn't going to be a problem.

"We didn't finish A Christmas Carol," Atem suddenly said, "do you want to finish it tonight?"

"Too tired," I said.

He rolled his eyes, "you are ridiculous."

"Fine," I said, changing my mind, "but you're not allowed to fall asleep on my bed."

"Sure. Whatever."

"Then c'mon," I started to walk faster, "let's hurry! I'm cold."

It was at work the next day that things officially began to get intense.

Grandma Seetha was a little bit busier than usual with orders, so while she spent her time in the back baking all the cakes and icing a couple of them, I spent my time in the front, tending to customers and icing a cake when I was free.

Atem did little things like put edible pearls all along the edge of the cake while my entire focus was on icing on swirly details along the sides. They were small and detailed so it took a long time, and Atem finished his job quick so he moved on to sweeping the shop.

At some point, he took a seat. I don't know when. But he sat there for a while and it was after I finished the detailed icing that I even noticed he was sitting.

I wiped my forehead with the back of my wrist to get rid of an itch as I examined the details. Once I was satisfied, I smiled, happy to know I was done. But right then, I saw Atem staring at me with his chin on his hand.

I watched him for a second before he barked a sharp, "what?"

It startled him, his chin literally slipping from his hand before he got back up and started sweeping, "nothing."

At that moment, what he said to be the night before replayed through my head.

I look better when I'm icing cakes?

I felt myself blush a little as I lifted the cake and took it to my grandma to refrigerate.

I was super curious now.

Why was he staring at me like that?

My brother's warnings started to ring in my head, which made my blushing worse.

But despite that, I started to pester him. I asked him over and over again to tell me why he was staring at me. He kept denying it at first but eventually he started to tell me to just shut up.

However, I was dying to know.

So as we walked home that evening, I stomped my foot in the snow, "Oh c'mon Atem! Tell me!"

"It's nothing, woman. Leave me be."

"I know you were thinking something while you were staring," I grabbed his hand, "what was it?"

He immediately pulled his arm away from me, "stop it."

"C'mon 'Tem! Tell me, tell me, tell me—"

"Dear Ra, woman, fine!"

I started to beam.

"You make a weird face when you ice cakes."

The smile faded, "what?"

He shrugged.

I started to walk faster, "wow. That was it?"

"What, were you fishing for compliments or something?"

I rolled my eyes and just walked into my building in disappointment.

When we got home, I was surprised to see that my door was unlocked.

I knew I locked it before I left, so I started to worry a little. But as I cautiously walked in, I saw someone walk right out of Atem's bedroom.

And almost instantly I had a heart attack.

It was my father.

"What is going on here, young woman?" No hello, no how are you, just straight to yelling at me.

"Dad."

"You have a *cat* here? A *cat* in my apartment? Without my permission? I come to ask you why you're late on your December payment and I see a *cat*?"

I opened my mouth to argue but he kept going.

"And from the looks of things, you have a *man* living with you?" He gestured at Atem, "is that him?"

Atem crossed his arms, a glare forming on his face.

"What is wrong with you, Mayaleena? Have you no self-respect? To allow a man to live with you at this age—"

I turned to Atem, "Hey, call Alec and ask him to pick you up. Just go to Ro's place for now while I talk to my dad."

Atem scoffed, but when he saw the look on my face he just nodded.

"Take Neferkiti too," I said, worried that something might happen to her.

Neferkiti, who had rushed to our side when we arrived, seemed to be worried or bothered too. So Atem picked her up and left, shutting the door behind him.

"Is that what you came for?" I asked as soon as the door was shut, "the December payment? Cause if that's it then here." I pulled open my purse took out my wallet, removed the bills and handed them to him, "take it and leave."

"Do *not* speak to me that way," he said as he pocketed the money, "I am your father."

Yeah. Only by genes.

"Your time and time again prove to be a disgrace to me, a disgrace to your mother and even a disgrace to your brother. Are you *that* selfish? Not caring about what your actions will make *us* look like?"

"I'm not doing anything wrong."

"Oh, don't try to act all innocent. You've done nothing but embarrass me. I don't know what the hell I did to deserve a daughter like you. What are you doing in school again? *Anthropology*? It's ridiculous."

Suddenly, I burst.

"You and mom chose to abandon me," I screamed, tears welling up in my eyes, "so I can do whatever I want now! Don't tell me what to do!"

And now he looked furious, "If you will continually disobey me then I want

nothing to do with you!" he shouted back, "you will no longer have the right to live off of me—"

"Live *off* of you?" I yelled, "I've been paying—"

"You will *pack up your things*," he said firmly, "and leave by the end of January."

I fell silent.

"You are no longer allowed to live here. If you wish to disgrace me than I have no intention of helping you in any way."

I scoffed, "helping me?" I asked, "you have *never* helped me, dad. Not once."

My dad didn't say anything to that. Instead, he walked past me and slammed the door shut.

Almost immediately, I started to cry.

I wanted to break something.

Anything.

So I ran into my room and tried to slam the door as hard as I could.

Of course, it didn't break.

So I climbed onto my bed, leaned against the headboard, hugged my legs and started to bawl my eyes out.

The water works hadn't even gone on for a minute when I felt my bed move. I looked up quickly and was both surprised and annoyed by the fact that Atem was sitting on the edge of my bed, staring at me.

Neferkiti jumped up onto the bed too, sitting at my feet purring as she rubbed against me.

"I thought I told you to go," I said to him as I wiped away my tears away.

He shrugged but then leaned against the headboard beside me, "is it... my

fault that your father is upset?"

I let out a small laugh as I continued to try and wipe my tears away, "no. He's just a douche bag."

"But he's mad that I'm here."

"No," I repeated, "he's mad that I'm not doing what he wants me to be doing and he's trying to find a way to scare me into doing things his way." I sighed, "whether you were here or not he would have found something to yell at me about."

"Well, he's an asshole," Atem said, "I believe that's how you use that term?"

I chuckled, though the tears wouldn't stop. I think that was the first time I heard him use that word.

I then signed again and hugged my legs tightly, "we're gonna have to find a new place to live. He pretty much kicked me out," I played with my toes as I spoke, letting my tears soak my jeans, "Uncle Ethan did say I could rely on him... Maybe I should give him a call—"

I cut myself off when I felt Atem put his arm around my shoulder and gently rub it, as if trying to comfort me. It wasn't like the usual, awkward touch. This was a firm hold, and it almost immediately made me feel better. Especially when he pulled me closer to him, "I'll help in any way that I can," he said, "I don't know if it means anything to you, but I... am here for you."

I was taken aback by this. But I smiled and rested my head on his shoulder, "thanks Atem. That does mean a lot."

"Well, it's the least I can do for all the help you've given me."

I wasn't crying anymore, which was a good thing since I hated crying in front of people, but I was still upset.

"Why does he disapprove of you're choices so much? Is it that important for him that you be a lawyer?"

"He cares too much about the family name. To him, I'm not just a daughter...

I'm a vessel that is meant to make him look good. And that comes first to him."

"That's ridiculous."

"I know."

"Was there ever a point where you wanted to do what he wanted you to do?"

"When I was a kid, I guess. I mean, what little girl doesn't want to be daddy's little angel? I always tried to impress him with my marks and all that kind of stuff... But it was when I got to high school that I realized it was all the wrong things that impressed him. He was never impressed by things like me learning to ride a bike, or my first really good cake, or any of that sort of stuff. And to be honest, it was after Aunty Maya joined the family that I realized that. She used to praise me for the smallest things..." I started to tear up again, "Like how neat I kept my notebooks or how nicely I could braid hair. It was weird to me but it made me so happy. It also made me realize that every time I made a simple mistake my dad would spaz out at me. It could be as simple as forgetting to put away a dish... And every time he spazzed at me he'd always bring up the fact that I was going to make him look bad. I didn't get it when I was a kid but I did eventually start to understand." I sighed, "but whatever. It's good for me to part with him. He's never done me any good anyways."

"I agree," Atem said, still rubbing my shoulder, "such a conceited man is not worth your time."

I smiled, well, at least we agreed on that. "We're probably gonna have to start packing up... I'm so relieved it's not exam period. If it was I would be so screwed."

"It's fine, I always enjoyed packing. As Pharaoh I traveled a lot and packing things into trunks was enjoyable."

I smiled, "well, I'm glad. And Uncle Ethan will welcome us with open arms but we gotta make sure we aren't too much of a hassle for him."

He nodded, "did your Aunty Maya live with him before her death?"

I nodded, "yeah, they bought that apartment together for the time being. They were planning on getting a house of Aunty Maya ever got pregnant."

"Maybe moving there is a blessing then," Atem said, "since you'll be closer to her."

"You're right."

We talked like that for some time, and at some point I fell fast asleep. But I didn't sleep for long. I found myself waking up in my bed at around midnight. My stomach was growling since I didn't eat dinner and I also needed to pee.

So I freshened myself up in the washroom made my way to the kitchen.

Atem was surprisingly awake.

He was sitting on the couch, reading Hunger Games. We watched the movie together and he seemed to have a crush on Katniss. So when I told him that there were books, he really wanted to read them.

I didn't mind the crushes on the fictional characters.

That was fine.

I mean I had a crush on Jon Snow, Sasuke Uchiha, Edward Elric and even L from Death Note.

I even had a crush on Ji Chang Wook and G-Dragon and Kim Jong Kook. (Hot Korean celebrities, if you couldn't figure it out.)

Obviously unattainable crushes were fine.

When he noticed me, he smiled a small smile, "feeling better?"

I nodded, smiling back.

He got up from his spot and walked over to me, and just then I spotted a plate with aluminum foil over it.

"I made you dinner," he said, blushing slightly, "it's mashed potatoes and gravy and steak."

Despite the fact that all of that was pretty much stuff that was in my fridge which he warmed up and put onto a plate, I was pretty flattered by the act of

kindness, "Thank's 'Tem."

I started to gobble it all down right away since I was starving, and he just stood rather awkwardly next to me, watching me.

When I looked at him, he spoke up again, "so you are feeling okay?"

"Yeah, no worries," I smiled, "I'm gonna call Uncle Ethan in the morning and talk to him. It's gonna be a big struggle but oh well, we gotta do what we gotta do."

He nodded and then pointed at my face, "your eyes are red."

"Still?" I rubbed them with the back of my hands, I thought they would settle down but I guess they didn't, "well, that's embarrassing."

"You should go back to sleep. You're tired, clearly."

"I will."

He was silent for a moment and then he looked at me, "I think I know something that will make you feel a lot better."

I chuckled, but the thought that he wanted to make me feel better made my heart skip a beat. "Try me," I said, jokingly.

I could see his cheeks redden slightly under his dark skin, "remember how you asked me why I was staring at you?"

My cheeks started to warm up too, "yeah, you said it was cause I make weird faces."

"I lied."

"Really?"

He nodded, "you look... you have this..." he took a breath and let it out, "you look... most attractive... when you're focused on something."

If I wasn't blushing already, I was definitely now. My cheeks burned and I suddenly got light headed.

He was calling me attractive?

"I notice it when you study... but also when you put the decorations on the cakes."

I placed a hand on my cheek, "you think so?"

He looked away, "yeah, I guess."

"You're not just saying that to make me feel better?"

"No. I'm not."

"Aww! Thank you, 'Tem!"

He crossed his arms, "it's only when you are focused though, all the other times you look like a mess, seriously—"

I started to chuckle, which made him look at me.

"Don't get all high and cocky or anything—"

It took a lot of courage on my part, but I did it.

I took a deep breath... and I did it.

I got on my toes.

And shut him up by kissing his cheek.

When I pulled away, I saw him staring at me in shock, So I hugged him real tight trying to hide my own embarrassment but also because I wanted to hug him.

"Thanks Atem," I said, "I feel completely better."

He stood there frozen for a bit, but then he hugged me back, doing that weird back pat thing he always seemed to do. "Good," he said, "I'm glad."

Chapter 19 - [The Photograph and the Pharaoh]

HEY EVERYONE! THIS IS IMPORTANT***

Some of you may have noticed that the title of this chapter is different from all the others and that is because this is a different kind of chapter! =D

Any chapter titled "Beauty and the _____" is told in May's perspective.

And any chapter titled "_____ and the Pharaoh" is told in Atem's perspective!

So as you have now figured out, this chapter is told in Atem's perspective!

I hope you enjoy it! I will normally be uploading on Friday or Saturday now but this early upload is an apology for the late one last time! HEHE! But no worries, there will still be an upload on Friday! So you get two uploads in a week! YAYYYY!

Please let me know what you think by COMMENTING! And please also continue to VOTE! =D Also, if you haven't already but like my stories, please FOLLOW me too! I would greatly appreciate the support!

Thank you as always and I hope you enjoy being in Atem's head,

Luckycharms <3

P.S. I have put up the prologue of a new story called THE HAPPINESS COORDINATOR! If you haven't already, please check it out and let me know what you think! It would mean a lot to me! =D



The thing I hated the most about this world was how quiet the early mornings were and how noisy the late nights were. Nights were meant to be silent. It was when sun god Ra would pass on into the underworld and we were supposed to *sleep*. It was not when everyone was supposed to allow drunken men to run around or to play thumping music or sound the sirens. And mornings were meant to be filled with life as it was when Ra would be reborn into the sky. But instead, here mornings were dead. Dead and silent and gloomy.

It was a habit of mine to wake up very early since in Egypt, I had many chores that needed to be done before the day really started.

One of the many chores was praying.

Of course, there were no temples here and no means of providing any sort of offerings to the gods, so I often simply sat in my bed once I had awoken, closed my eyes and paid my respects.

I assumed the gods were satisfied with this, since nothing particularly horrible had happened to me since the curse.

Other than the cold weather.

God, did I hate the cold weather.

After praying, I would wash myself up in the awkward contraption that I had become used to calling the shower and use the even more awkward contraption that I had become used to calling the toilet.

Once that was done, I would eat my breakfast and then check to see if May was awake.

She never was, since she wasn't an early riser. She was like everyone else in this world, gloomy and tired and lifeless in the mornings. But nonetheless I would open her bedroom door and peek in.

May would always be asleep either with her hands over her head or curled up into a ball. She was covered with thick blankets and she had three pillows, one under her head and the other two at both sides of her.

But again, she was asleep.

So I walked into the living room, sat at the couch and read.

Mornings were so lonely in this world.

Even with the windows open, I could hear nothing. Not a single soul. And the cold weather made it worse because I could not even hear the chirps of a single bird.

It was six in the morning now, and at my balcony in Egypt, by this time you could hear the markets bustling with people, kids beginning their day of play in the courtyard and the sounds of animals everywhere.

Here, there was nothing.

Occasionally I would hear a loud whistle-like sound and when I questioned May about it she said it might have been a train.

Another strange contraption that I didn't think I would ever understand.

My point being, mornings were quiet and I didn't like it.

At a little bit before seven on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I would get ready to go and exercise with Blake.

I thoroughly enjoyed doing that. It made up for all the time I spent cooped up in this small home of May's and Blake, like me, was a morning person which made my mornings a little less lonely.

Since today was Monday, I got ready quickly and made my way out of the building.

Blake was never late.

He arrived in his car either early or just as I exited the building. And I would enter his car and he would drive me to the gym.

Normally, most of the talking was done in the car. We wouldn't talk at the gym. And today, he seemed really eager to talk to me.

So the second I stepped into his car, he spoke up, "May's brother called me last night."

I looked at him and waited for him to continue.

That was neither a question nor a statement worth responding to, so I didn't say anything. I just waited for him to continue.

"He mentioned that her father was over the other day?"

A question. "Yes. He was."

Blake shook his head, "Marv's furious that May didn't call him. He's flying here now."

Flying? That's ridiculous. So I assumed it was some sort of saying. Similar to how May says 'I'm going to run to the store.'

It was quite obvious that she was not running anywhere.

May was horrible in all forms of athletics.

"What is her brother going to do?" I asked, "how did he find out?"

"Their dad called to tell Marv to cancel the cable and Wi-Fi plans at the apartment," Blake said, using terms I didn't understand, "but Marv got upset and now he's fighting with his dad too."

"Well, I think it might be good for May to know that her brother is on her side."

"Yeah," Blake said, "she must be freaking out, huh?"

Freaking out meant panicking in this world, from what I remembered. And no, not so much anymore.

It almost seemed like she was over it. She didn't seem to worry about it and had made the plan to start packing this coming weekend.

"She called her uncle and he has allowed her to stay at his place. So I think she is fine."

"Good," Blake said, "I'm glad she's okay. I told Marv that you probably did your part in making her feel better too. Hopefully you can get on his good side."

My cheeks started to warm up when he said that. So I turned my head and looked out the window, placing my elbow against the door and holding my face in my hands.

"You don't know if I did that," I simply said.

I figured he was smiling. He often smiled when we spoke of May.

Of course, he was right. I had done my part in helping her feel better.

And it resulted in her... kissing my cheek.

My cheeks warmed even more, a feeling I was utterly unfamiliar with.

What she had done was unacceptable. A peasant could never touch a Pharaoh in such a way.

But then again, maybe she was not exactly a peasant. She could read and write. And she owned a lot of luxurious things.

Like the meat. She *always* had meat. *Always*.

I have never seen such a luxury back at home. To be able to access that much meat so easily... that must have meant she wasn't a peasant.

And despite the fact that she had a horrible relationship with her father... he was rich. At least, that was what I understood from what she told me. And her mother was too.

If that were the case, than May would be a noblewoman, at least.

Would that make the kiss more acceptable?

I closed my eyes and shook my head.

Why does that even matter?

After the exercise, Blake dropped me back at home and I walked into the apartment to see May awake.

She had already cleaned herself up, makeup on her face and already wearing all her winter clothes.

May always looked good when she wore makeup. Not that she looked bad when she didn't... she looked very kind without makeup but with makeup she looked a little... fierce?

What I meant to say, however, was that she was *good* at applying it. Sometimes she still needed my help with the eyeliner but most of the time she was fine.

She looked like she was almost ready to go to that unnecessarily large school of hers to learn something that was supposed to help her get a job in the future.

"Hey," she smiled at me for no reason as she said it, "how was your morning?"

"Good," I said, "Blake told me that your brother is *flying* here."

Her smile immediately faded.

To be honest, I thought she would be happy.

"Really?"

"Yes."

She let out a breath, "oh man. Flying? I'm probably in trouble if he found the need to take a plane."

I stared at her with a blank expression on my face as I tried to remember what a *plane* was. When I did remember, the entire 'flying' thing began to make sense.

"Did Blake say anything else?"

"He said your brother is taking your side."

"Oh," May looked surprised, "well then that's good. Maybe he'll help me pack." She walked past me and started to pack a huge book into her equally huge purse.

Then she walked back towards the kitchen, grabbed the toasted bread that was on the table and started eating it quickly, "I'm late..." She said between bites, "maybe you should wake me up before you leave—"

"I can do that," I said quickly. The thought of less lonely mornings was rather pleasant.

"Well then good," she responded, rushing to the door to put on her heeled shoes, "I'll remind you tonight but for now, I gotta go."

"When will you be back?"

"In a couple hours," she knelt down and gave the precious Neferkiti a pat on her head, "but I'll meet you at Grandma Seetha's shop."

"Right."

She smiled again, "see you!"

And with that, she was out the door, leaving Neferkiti and I behind.

And I was alone.

Again.

Well, Neferkiti was here, I guess.

I sighed, debating on whether I should read or not until it was time for me to leave to Grandma Seetha's house.

I liked reading, it made me feel peaceful.

I was always like that though. Even back at home, I spent a lot of time reading, sometimes stories, sometimes not.

And thus, I was grateful in a sense that May taught me how to read. I mean, I did pick it up fast, since I was smart, but the effort she put in to help me was... nice.

Plus, she had a vast collection of books that I was also grateful for, though she didn't exactly keep them nicely.

She gave me permission to enter her bedroom and open the closet in order to find stacks and stacks of boxes filled with books. She told me she had meant to buy some shelves but couldn't afford any at that very moment.

So instead, she kept them in her closet.

And so, I made my way into her room to find a new book. I had just finished the Hunger Games Series and I must admit that they were thoroughly enjoyable. Katniss Everdeen was quite the woman. I personally preferred Gale. But then I changed my mind and wasn't sure how I felt about that character by the end of the story.

Anyways, it was a good set of books.

When I opened May's closet, her scent exploded out of it.

Originally when I first met her, I hated her smell.

In the past, she often used a fragrance that smelled like flowers but something about it was... fake, and unnatural. It was horrendous.

But then she switched to something more sweet. I couldn't understand what it was, but it was much better.

In regards to her natural scent... I think I've been spending too much time with her to even remember what that smelled like.

Not that I ever tried to remember it or anything.

I had to admit, however, she had a remarkably lovely smell immediately after she washed her hair. It was fresh and sweet and I could smell it from a good distance away.

And speaking of hair, May had a lot of hair... more hair than I've ever seen on anyone. It wasn't very long, but it was thick, and after she showered and her hair dried, it looked almost like a lions mane. It was so thick and voluminous... women at my home would try to achieve such a look with wigs but she had it naturally.

Which is why I found it shocking that she would straighten it in order to 'tame it,' as she would say.

She was such a fool.

The scent in her closet was the scent of her new, tolerable fragrance she used, so when I sat down in front of the boxes, I didn't scowl or gag.

I just took a deep breath and tried, unsuccessfully, to figure out what the scent was.

And then I searched for a new book. There were many, many books to pick from and none of the first couple appealed to me.

But then I was surprised by a book titled simply as "Nefertiti."

Of course, *that* caught my attention.

Nefertiti was the wife of the strange king Akhenaten. Yes, my name is similar to

his, but to be clear, Aten and Atem are two different things. Aten is the solar disk. Atem is a creator god.

Anyways, Akhenaten seemed to get a lot of attention in this world. A heretic king, May's people called him. I guess it was true though.

But in my lands, even more famous than him was his wife Nefertiti. Apparently she was *beautiful*. As was Queen Nefertari, wife of Ramesses the Great. Nefertari was also known for how intelligent she was.

Yes.

This book seemed interesting.

But just as I was about to close the box and begin reading, another book caught my attention.

It was a black, thick book that had no words on the cover. It did, however, have a photo of May and her brother in a small box at the front.

I pulled the book out of the box and when I opened it up, I saw that it was filled with photos.

May had explained to me what photo's were. She had a couple around her home and took a lot with her phone.

But I never knew people made books out of them.

Almost instantly, though, I found myself smirking.

The first page was filled with photos of a young, grinning, chubby child with her hair pulled up into two ponytails. It was instantly obvious that this girl was May, simply from the thickness of the hair and the downturned shape of her eyes.

I had become familiar with the shape of her eyes simply because they always looked... friendly.

It was strange.

And clearly her eyes had not changed a bit since she was a child.

There were a lot of pictures of her in this book. Most of them had other people in them, but some of them were her alone.

I think my favorite picture was this one where someone took the photo from above her. She looked to be two years of age, staring straight at me from the paper with her hands held straight out at both sides of her as if she were balancing herself. Her hair was shoulder length and as thick as it is now and on her head she wore a pink headband that had a flower on one side. The wide grin from most of her childhood pictures was also on her face and she was in a pink, fluffy dress.

I pulled that particular photo from the book and stared at it for a bit.

There was no way I could deny that she was an adorable child. She was not at all like that anymore... but as a child, yes.

It seemed nice to be able to preserve memories in photos. This is one of the few things I wish we had back in Egypt.

I even began to wonder if I ever grinned like this before. As I child, I might have... but we had no such way of preserving such moments in time.

I mean, I couldn't even remember a reason for why I may have grinned like an idiot as May was doing in this picture.

My father may have made me laugh.

I couldn't remember though. However, I could remember exactly why I don't grin anymore.

But as I stared at the picture, I wondered why *she* never grinned like that anymore.

Was it her father?

Or maybe her busy schedule?

Or maybe it was just because she had grown out of it.

Whatever the case, the thought of her never smiling like this again wasn't a

pleasing one.

A grin like this could make anyone smile.

I mean, it made *me* smile, didn't it? If it could make me smile, then I'm sure anyone could smile.

But that was the thing about May.

She had this strange effect on me...

She made me happy.

I didn't know what it was about her, but she made me happy.

She made me unbelievably furious sometimes too.

But a lot of people can do that. It's not hard for me to get mad, not hard at all.

Not very many people can make me happy though.

And as I stared at that photo of her, she was doing it again. A May that lived maybe sixteen years prior to this moment could make me smile.

It was strange indeed.

Especially since I found myself putting the photo book back in the box, closing the closet and walking off... taking the photo of young May with me.

I didn't know why I took it, but I wanted to.

Besides, I could do whatever I wanted.

I *was* Pharaoh, after all.

Chapter 20 - [Beauty and the Confession]

HEY GUYS!

I just wanted to say again that I've put up the prologue of a new story called THE HAPPINESS COORDINATOR! If you haven't already, please check it out and let me know what you think because I really wanna know if people are going to like it or not! It would mean so much to me! <3 HEHE!

Hope you enjoy the chapter!!

-Luckycharms <3



Atem wasn't lying when he said that my brother was coming... fast. He was literally at my place right before I went to work the day after Atem told me he was coming.

"Mayaleena," he called the second I walked in from work.

I wanted to roll my eyes but didn't because I knew he was gonna take my side. He just wanted to discipline me.

"What on earth do you think you're doing?"

"I didn't do anything, Marv."

Marv groaned and practically didn't notice Atem leave from behind me and walk towards his room, "I know you didn't, May, but you could have at least *tried* to be nice."

"Why should I be nice?" I asked, "he's the one being an asshole."

My brother put a hand on his head, "well dad's pissed off at me now too—"

"No way," I crossed my arms, "dad would never be mad—"

"The apartment is under my name, May," he said, "I told dad that he can't be taking money from you to begin with... and that he can't kick you out."

I hesitated.

"You're not going anywhere," he said, "you're staying here. And you don't need to pay dad anymore."

No way. "Marv... what did you say to him?"

"Don't worry about it," he said, "I just put down some conditions that dad accepted."

"What conditions?"

"I said don't worry about it."

Knowing Marv, he probably told our dad something along the lines of 'if you don't be nice to May, I'm going to switch to trying to get a PhD.'

Secretly, Marv did really want to continue his education and get a PhD... but instead he threw aside his own desires to make my parents happy.

"Marv... you didn't have to do that... I was going to be staying with Uncle Ethan—"

"There's no need for you to burden Uncle Ethan. Even if he wouldn't ever think you were burdening him. Just stay here. Dad won't bother you anymore."

I sighed, "thanks Marv."

"But seriously May... I understand that dad is the one being the jerk but you have to at least *try* to not piss him off. You need to have a relationship with your father, whether you like it or not."

"I know," he was *technically* right... whether I liked it or not. Family was family... but that didn't mean I was going to go apologize or anything. I did nothing wrong.

Marv placed a hand on my shoulder, "hopefully he'll come around eventually."

I doubted that.

"But I've got to get going. I have school and just came cause dad won't take me seriously over the phone."

I hugged my brother, "thanks for always being there for me, Marv."

He returned the hug, tightly. "Please, *please* call me if something happens. I don't like finding things out from a third party. Especially dad."

I chuckled, "yeah."

With that, Marv left and Atem and I headed to work.

Work was normal today. Nothing special happened and as usual I worked on cakes. Occasionally, I would see the glance of Atem from the corner of my eye, which would make my heart skip a beat. I mean, I knew now that he thought I was attractive while I focused and iced cakes. But I pretended I didn't see it and continued on with my work.

However, once work was done, Atem and I obviously started to argue as we walked home from Grandma Seetha's place.

I still kind of wanted to go stay with Uncle Ethan since I'd rather not feel like I was living off of my father.

But Atem thought that was a ridiculous idea. He thought it was better to stay. He argued that the apartment technically belonged to me now because my brother said so, so I wouldn't be living off of anyone.

"But my dad still paid for the thing," I said, annoyed, "which means I'm living on his money."

"Who cares," Atem rolled his eyes, "if we have to pick between living with your Uncle Ethan and living alone I think the obvious choice is living alone."

He was right about that. It would be kinda awkward for Atem and I to be living with Uncle Ethan, no matter how close I was to him.

I sighed, "but still, I think—"

I was cut off when I bumped into someone.

When I turned around to apologize, I was surprised to see Julian.

I always seemed to bump into him. But you could hardly blame me, he would always appear out of nowhere.

"Hey, May."

"Julian!" I smiled, "Hey, and sorry."

He smiled too, "no reason to worry," he said, "actually I was going to contact you to ask you if we could meet up."

"Oh, really?" From the corner of my eye I saw Atem cross his arms.

"Yes... and since you're here, I might as well just ask you and get it over with."

I kept smiling, waiting for him to speak, "sure, what's up?"

He put a hand behind his head and suddenly looked a little awkward, "Um, well, I think you are a really sweet girl and I wanted to ask you if you'd be willing to go on a date with me."

I swear, my jaw dropped.

That caught me off guard. I literally did not expect that at all.

I mean, I barely knew the guy! Plus he was super hot. And he was asking me out on a date?

What?

So I stood there frozen for a moment, heart beating a little faster than usual.

"Um..." I swallowed back my nervousness and grabbed Atem's hand, which I immediately noticed was balled up into a fist, "I'm so sorry but I can't."

Julian's head tilted slightly, "oh?"

"I'm kinda... dating..."

His eyes fell on Atem for a moment before he looked back at me and chuckled, "Oh, well this is awkward."

I chuckled too, "yeah, but... you're a great guy! I hope—"

"No worries," Julian smiled, "I won't make it awkward between us. I hope we can at least be friends."

"Of course!"

He nodded his head.

"Well, we better be going, I'll see you in class?" I started to walk away, dragging Atem and his fist behind me.

"Yeah, see you."

I was walking really fast, trying to get as far away from Julian as possible. Oh man, that was so awkward.

But when we were finally a good distance away, Atem pulled his hand away, "what is wrong with you?"

I rolled my eyes and kept walking.

"A fairly decent looking boy asks you to date him and you turn him down?" He asked, "and you call us boys difficult?"

"Why would I say yes if I'm not even interested?"

"You could just give him a chance," he said, "besides, you probably did something to make him feel that way. Women are so difficult."

"I didn't do anything! And I didn't want to."

"You are such a child."

I pouted my lips and crossed my arms, getting annoyed. Was he seriously going to argue with me about this?

Idiot.

He didn't know anything.

"I feel sorry for the fool who ends up with you."

I stopped walking and heard him stop walking too.

And then I turned around and glared at him, "you are such a jerk."

He shrugged and looked away.

"You wanna know why I said no?"

He looked back at me.

"I thought you said girls who spoke their minds were the attractive ones?"

"You weren't speaking your mind. You were being an immature child."

"No, you douchebag. I'm going to speak my mind right now and you're going to listen, got it?"

He raised an eyebrow.

I took a deep breath. It was now or never.

"I like *you*."

I expected the long silence that came with what I just said, but what I didn't expect was the embarrassment that would fill me.

Every second that passes my blood would boil a degree hotter.

I could probably get a fever now and just die.

Not that I would mind that.

I had never in my life said something so crazy to a boy.

But then again I've never in my life met a boy as crazy as Atem.

But despite all that... I wondered what the worst that could happen was?

He'd turn me down... then we'd move on. At least I could get the chance to get over it and stuff... right?

But it was his reaction that made me realize that a simple rejection was not the worst thing that could happen.

He unsurprisingly surprised me by being a bigger ass-hat than I imagined.

He laughed.

He laughed and laughed and when he was finally finished he looked at me with the most demeaning expression which made all that embarrassment inside me turn to anger.

"You're kidding, right?" He asked, "you have to be joking."

I didn't respond.

"You really think you'd have a chance with me?" He asked, "I'm a *pharaoh*. And not just any pharaoh, I'm supposedly an evil one. Why on earth would you ever even consider—"

"I was kidding," I lied, feeling the tears forming, "asshole."

Atem let out another laugh. "Okay. Thank goodness."

"Go home," I said, turning around, "I have to go get some stuff."

"Fine," he simply said.

And I practically ran off as fast as I could.

After escaping from Atem, I found my way to the park, sitting at the bench on the cliff side with the decent view of the city below.

I didn't really cry, mostly because I was so mad at him.

So mad and embarrassed.

He didn't have to be such a total jerk. He didn't have to laugh at me and practically tell me I'm not even worth his time.

But then again, who was I kidding?

Ugh! What on earth was I thinking? Why would I ever even consider liking a guy like him? He was a total jerk and stupid too.

Why on earth would I ever stop liking a guy as kind and sweet as Blake and move on to this asshole?

I must have been asking to be made a fool of.

I wanted to call Aurora and tell her what happened, she could make me feel better in an instant... but I was too worried that if start crying and she'd freak out and try to attack Atem.

I'd have to settle down first—

"May?"

I looked up quickly, startled by Blake's voice.

He was standing beside me, two cups of some sort of warm drinks in his hand.

Almost immediately after seeing my face, he sat down next to me, "what's wrong?"

"Huh?" Was all I could say. I was just too surprised to see him.

He pulled a handkerchief out from inside his uniform and handed it to me.

It was then that I realized I was crying.

I quickly used his handkerchief to wipe away my tears, some of my makeup coming off with it. "What are you doing here?" I asked, trying to not be any more embarrassed than I already was.

"I'm on break," He said as he sat next to me, "was picking up a coffee for my partner and I but I thought I'd stop by here for a bit." He then handed me the drink, "take it."

"But you said it's for you partner."

"I'll grab him another."

I hesitated but took it from him. I was thirsty and exhausted. A coffee would be nice, "thanks."

"So... wanna talk about it?"

I sighed, "it's like whatever supreme force is watching over me is trying to make a fool out of me today."

He chuckled, "don't worry. I won't judge."

I smiled at him, already feeling a bit better. But I sighed again before I spilled the beans, "I kind of had a crush on Atem and I told him and he laughed at me." I said, quickly.

His eyebrows rose.

"Don't tell Marv," I added.

"I won't," he said, "but wow. Did this happen just now?"

I nodded, "a little while ago."

Blake gave me his usually warm smile, "it's been a rollercoaster for you since he arrived, hasn't it?"

I snorted, "more like a trip to the moon in a crappy spaceship. I'm just wondering now when and if I'll ever be able to come back down to earth."

I mean, would I?

Could my life ever be the same after his arrival?

"Well," he started, "if it makes you feel better, I think he's an asshole too."

I looked at him and laughed when I saw the sincerity in his eyes.

"But that's not all I think," he continued, "do you want to know what else I think?"

I nodded.

"I probably don't know him as well as you do, since you live with the guy and I see him three or four times a week to workout... but I agree with your brother."

"My brother?"

"Your brother was venting to me the entire holidays after he stayed with you and Atem," he sipped his drink, "he made me promise to make sure you don't do anything stupid with him."

"So you think what I did was stupid?"

"No, that's not what I agree with... I agree with the fact that it's obvious Atem has some sort of feelings for you."

I rolled my eyes. It was this nonsense that started the entire mess I was currently in.

"Really, May... guys can tell cause we see it in ourselves. It's harder for you to understand but as a guy... I can read Atem like an open book," he kept his eyes on me, "and I should add that having a psychology and sociology degree plus being a police officer helps, but I mostly know I'm right cause I'm a boy."

I chuckled at that, seeing where he was coming from. Blake wasn't just a people person... he studied people and minds and stuff.

"Atem has clearly gone through some serious stuff in his life... You may know it already or maybe you don't, but whatever the case may be, he's gone through some rough stuff. You can tell by the way he acts now. People who are so closed off and rough and bad at socializing were probably really lonely or bullied or just always put under some sort of pressure as a child."

Well, he got that right.

"For all I know, maybe it had something to do with the crazy night you met him... But he's not exactly going to be easy to work with."

"I know..."

"However, from the short amount of time I've spent with him, I've begun to understand that he cares about you and worries about you, though he doesn't blatantly show it. You gotta have a good eye to catch the hints.

"Like?"

"Like how obvious it is that he likes it when you smile. I've noticed it when I

come over... you might be grinning and talking on the phone with Aurora but you should see the expression on his face when he sees that smile of yours. Total calmness. There's no other time I see that look."

"Really?"

He nodded. "And you can't ignore the number of times he's come to your rescue. Plus, every time you're brought up, the way he talks and acts and even the expression on his face changes. It takes me a lot of effort to hold back my laugh... it's *that* obvious." He smiled as he said it, "to be honest, I kind of felt bad for him because I originally thought you weren't into him. Oh, and I've caught him staring at you a couple times too."

I have as well. "But why does he always act so mean if you think he even cares about me at all?"

"It's simply because he doesn't know how to act, May," he said, "Atem is anti-social. My best guess is that he laughed cause he didn't know how to respond. I mean, maybe he was thrilled that you felt that way but just didn't know how to respond. So he reverted to his usually ways, the way he's most comfortable with, and chose to be mean."

I pouted, "how are you so sure?"

Blake put a hand on my leg, "he's an open book, lovely. Trust me," he said, "And you have to understand that he's got these walls that he's built up and he doesn't know how to bring them down. And these walls of his have weapons and cannons and all those kinds of things that he knew how to control once upon a time but not anymore."

I blinked, getting what he was saying.

"If you wanna get through to him, you're gonna have to dodge the cannons and take a couple wounds so that you can reach him and help him take down that wall. And it's after that that you'll finally be able to really see how he feels for you."

I sat silently for a moment before smiling, "you should be a poet, Blake."

Blake winked at me, "Actually, I write poetry in my free time."

He was joking, I was sure, but I wouldn't be too surprised if I was wrong.

I totally got what he was saying... And if I weren't already upset about this whole Atem thing, then I would have been worrying more about the fact that his deduction skills probably allowed him to know exactly how I once felt about him.

Well, awkward much.

But that didn't matter right now.

What mattered was that Blake was right about this wall.

It was a wall made of mud brick and stone. In fact, it was a probably a pyramid. A big, ancient yet beautifully constructed pyramid.

And I don't think they had cannons back then so maybe what he was firing at me were arrows.

But whatever the case, Blake was right.

And Atem's total amusement over my confession was probably another arrow fired in my direction.

"May," Blake said, interrupting the short silence, "I should get going now, my break was over a while ago."

I gasped, "I'm sorry, Blake!"

He smiled as he stood up and then reached out and messed up my hair, "no worries. Just keep what I said in mind and don't tell your brother that I'm basically telling you to keep fighting."

I laughed, "I won't."

And after Blake left, I left too.

I decided to go home as fast as I could so that I could go into Hulk mode and give Atem and his three thousand year old pyramid a piece of my mind.

Unsurprisingly, Atem was reading when I got home. He didn't acknowledge my arrival so I kicked off my shoes and stormed into the living room.

He definitely acknowledged my half stomping half running approach and looked at me with his usual look of annoyance, "what?"

"We have to talk." I said, standing in front of him.

He was sitting with one leg over the other, and he shifted his body to lean against the arm of the couch. "What?" He repeated.

I scowled, "stop being an asshole and take me seriously for once."

He raised an eyebrow, "all I said was 'what.'"

"Exactly." I put my hands on my hips, "you need to be more attentive. More emotional."

Now he rolled his eyes, "why are you so angry? I thought you said you were joking—"

"Shut up, Atem."

I could see him bite the inside of his cheek.

I was making him mad.

Good.

"You aren't in Egypt anymore, Akhenatem. You're thousands of years, a couple continents and an ocean away from your home, to be exact."

"What is your point?"

"My point is that whatever scared you and made you an asshole over there isn't here. You aren't a king, for starters. You don't need to be scary to make sure people stay under your control. Secondly, you can't exactly get away with murder here. No ones gonna try and kill you—"

"What does this have to do with—"

"Stop being such a brat!" I said, "calm down! Open yourself up a bit! This is an entirely different world from yours... you're living an entirely different life! And maybe you got away with being a bratty jerk there but you can't over here!"

I was surprised that he didn't storm off yet, so ignored the anger on his face and kept going.

"You're most likely stuck here, Atem. We have no magic here and unless that wizard miraculously comes back then you're stuck here. And you killed him, remember? He turned into dust or something! So you're stuck here! So just cut me some slack and relax a little. I've already told you that maybe this life is a second chance so live it!"

Atem stood up now. I guess that was it for him.

"Hold on, I'm not done."

"I don't want to listen to your childish rant—"

"Childish? I scoffed, "if anyone is being childish, it's you!"

"Stop whining and go to bed, May."

He tried to walk away but I stepped in front of him, "I talked to Blake," I said, "and he really opened my eyes about you, you know?"

Now Atem looked at me.

"You had a rough life, Atem... If you'd just let me help you—"

"I don't need *your* help—"

"Stop lying to yourself!" I shouted.

Poor little Neferkiti was startled by the shout and rushed away from the two of us.

But Atem was shocked too.

"Do you hear yourself?" I asked, "I mean, I told you I liked you and you *laughed* at me. What kind of guy does that?"

"You said it was a joke."

"It wasn't a joke, stupid!" I yelled again. "I *like* you! I don't know why since you're such a stupid jerk but I do! But that's not important right now! What's important is that you let me help you be a normal guy."

He narrowed his eyes, then shook his head, dismissing what I said.

But when he tried to step around me, I grabbed both his arms and found myself digging my nails into his skin as I stared him down in annoyance.

He didn't wince or anything, which annoyed me. I used to do this to my brother when he upset me and it always made him stop upsetting me.

But of course, it didn't work with his guy. Nothing worked with this guy.

So I gave up.

I dropped my hands and sighed in defeat.

Being a total b-word wasn't going to work. I thought it would but clearly I was wrong.

So instead, I wrapped my arms around his waist and hugged him tightly.

"Please." I begged.

He stood there, frozen and stiff for a moment.

And then he hugged me back.

"You are the craziest girl I have ever met in my life," he said. "I don't understand you one bit."

"Same goes for you," I said before I let him go, "but I'm being serious."

He sighed, "I know."

Chapter 21 - [Beauty and the Egyptian History Tutor]

So yeah, I told him that I liked him and you're all probably wondering what happened next.

Like me, you probably hoped that after we hugged that night, he would have swept me off my feet and told me he liked me too... ever since he first laid eyes on me or something like that.

Well, to keep it simple, no.

That didn't happen.

But... I guess we were dealing with Atem after all.

We didn't talk about it at all after the night I told him and the night I spazzed at him. We were basically pretending it never happened.

But it wasn't weird. We were normal again. And to be honest, within the next couple days I had no time to worry about it all. Why? Well midterm season started and I had way too much to study for.

And surprisingly or not, the hardest course to study for was Ancient Egyptian History.

There were so many Pharaohs.

So many dynasties.

So many weird names.

So much to study.

I mean, it *was* interesting. Ancient Egyptian History was fantabulous!

But how the hell was I supposed to remember which King decided to commemorate the first pharaoh after each intermediate period?

Of course... It was as I was trying to memorize the spelling of Hatshepsut's name that I remembered something.

I had the number one Ancient Egypt resource in the world sitting in my living room.

So I called him.

"Akhenatem!" I said his full name out loud and practiced the spelling in my head while I waited for him to respond. I would need to learn that eventually too.

"What?" He responded from the living room.

"I need your help!" I said, "can you come here?"

I heard him get off the couch and walk into my room.

All my notes were scattered across the floor and my bed and he raised an eyebrow when he saw the mess.

"What is it?"

"I have to memorize the names and lives of all the Pharaohs and I was wondering if you could help me?"

He didn't seem too annoyed by this. In fact, he looked like he liked the idea.

He walked over to the other side of the bed and sat down, crossing his legs, "what's your test about?"

"Well, everything we learned up until the end of Dynasty 18, plus all the religion stuff." Thankfully I didn't need to learn *everything*. It was a midterm after all.

He picked up my papers and examined all of them for a good five minutes.

"I'm assuming by dynasty you mean House?"

"Yeah, pretty much." I guess they didn't use the term Dynasty.

"This is simple material, there's no detail in it at all," he said, "I don't see what's so difficult."

"Well, I don't know if you've forgotten or not, but I wasn't born and raised in Ancient Egypt, nor did I spend my entire life learning their history."

He smirked at that, "well, you like stories, right?"

I nodded.

"Than study it as a story."

"Yeah?"

He nodded, "that's how I did it."

"You had to *study* this?"

"Of course. I'm Pharaoh. The pharaoh has to know the history of his people."

I guess that made sense. "Then help me. Be my tutor."

He rolled his eyes and gathered up all my notes. Without any help from me, he easily put my notes back in order, "I'll have you know, some of these names and orders or reigns and just facts in general are incorrect. I noticed that in the books about Egypt that you got me for Christmas as well."

"Well cut the Egyptologists some slack," I said, "all they had to go off of was writing on the walls. But go off of what I have, I don't need to be more confused than I already am."

"Fine," he said, "which shall we start with, religion or the royal family?"

"Let's get the royal family over with."

"Okay, so your notes and text books start with King Narmer, the one who united both the Egypt's."

I nodded.

"Well, despite the fact that there is a lot more to the history than him, I'll just tell it your teachers way but as a story. Tell me if I'm going too fast or if you're confused."

"Yes sir."

He seemed to like that I said that, but continued on, "both upper and lower Egypt, which for your information is actually called Kemet by our people, were separate at first, with the people under the white crown in Upper Egypt and the red crown of Lower Egypt. King Narmer was the one who finally united the two lands together and created the unified Kemet, or Egypt..."

And this went on for hours.

We only stopped at the start of the story of each Pharaoh simply so that I could make note of his or her name and make notes to help me remember them. We also stopped whenever I had a question.

And despite the fact that Atem would pause and lament over the inaccuracies of facts, he changed the story so that it would fit what the professors of my time taught, whether it was wrong or not.

The fact he especially hated was this rumor that Thutmose III hated his aunt Hatshepsut. He said that Hatshepsut was in fact a glorious leader and her nephew adored her, as did most of Egypt. But when I asked why her monuments were destroyed, Akhenaten argued that the truth simply was that Thutmose III needed to further validate his claim to the throne. While doing that, things must have gotten out of hand. But that didn't mean that the two hated each other.

But whatever the case may have been... it was interesting to hear what Akhenaten had to say about certain things. Plus, he was right about the whole, learn it as a story thing.

It did help. A lot.

And by the end of his lesson on the royal families, I knew exactly which Pharaoh chose to commemorate the first Pharaohs after each intermediate period and why he did it. It was probably Ahmose, the Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty, by

the way.

He continued to teach me the next day as well. This time, he explained the religion to me.

He told me about Ra and Isis and Osiris and Horus and Seth and Ma-at and all those other gods. He told me how much Isis loved Osiris and how hard she worked to put his body back together after Seth killed him and cut him up. And I guess it was a cute love story... aside from the fact that they were siblings.

But hey... I couldn't judge. This was an entirely different culture and I was in no place to judge them.

He also explained how confusing my world was with this idea of a government separate from religion.

In his world, it was all one.

My professor had explained the same thing to us, and exemplified it with the royal titles of a Pharaoh.

The five names.

Which I couldn't understand at all.

"I don't understand why this is so complicated for you," Atem said, "use your brain and focus. It's simply five names."

We were sitting at the kitchen's island studying today, and Atem didn't seem to get that I had difficulty memorizing certain aspects of the Pharaoh's title.

"But I don't get each name... well I understand the first part. Horus. Easy peasy. He's the pharaoh God or whatever—"

"No," Akhenatem said, "he is not the pharaoh God. He is the God that Pharaohs associate themselves with. Pharaohs are him in human form."

"Same thing."

"Not the same thing, May."

"Okay, Mr. Horus in human form. Fine. Now explain the titles thing to me. What is this two ladies thing and the bee stuff?" I remember him using that in his name when we first met.

I found it hilarious back then.

Now... no. It was no laughing matter.

It was just super confusing.

Atem rolled his eyes before grabbing my notebook from me. He opened up to a blank page and used my black Sharpie to draw out a bunch of pictures in hieroglyphs.

"We'll use my name as an example," he turned the page so that it was in front of me. "What part do you know already?"

I pointed at the first part, a picture of a falcon sitting in some square thingy that was apparently supposed to represent a palace. "That's Horus. Sitting on a palace."

"Okay," he said before he pointed at the second part, "what's this?"

I shrugged. It just looked like a bunch of hieroglyphs to me.

"It's the second part of the title, the two ladies."

"What does that mean?"

"Simply put, Northern Egypt is represented by Wadjet and Southern Egypt is represented by Nekhbet. The title represents a United Egypt. The land of the two ladies."

I didn't know that at all, "really?"

He nodded before he drew something quickly underneath the symbol that meant two ladies. When he was done, I noticed it was a king tut hat.

"If it helps you to memorize it," he started as he pointed at the hat, "I'm sure you've seen this headdress before? To your people it seems more popular than

the Egyptian crown itself."

"Yeah, the King Tut Hat."

Atem gave me an annoyed look before continuing, "it's a version of the Egyptian *crown*. Not a hat. But anyways, see the cobra here?" He pointed at the snake at the top of the hat, "that represents Wadjet."

Oh my gosh, I didn't know that either. I just thought it was decorations.

"And this bird, the vulture, that's Nekhbet. Use this crown to remember the second part of the title. The two ladies."

"Wow. That actually does help."

"Good. Now the third part of the title, Horus of Gold, represents the sun. Ra. It could also represent the never changing nature of gold, which also relates to the never-ending cycle of the sun. Either one is acceptable."

"Okay yeah, I get that one too... but the sedge and bee thing..."

"That's the fourth part," he pointed at the part of the picture that had a cartouche and a couple hieroglyphs on top of it. "Similar to the two ladies, the sedge represents upper Egypt and the bee represents lower Egypt. It is another symbol of unity."

"But why sedge and bee?"

"It's symbolism, you idiot. You find the bee in lower Egypt and the sedge in upper." He pointed at the paper, "look, the sedge hieroglyph might be hard to identify but there is a clear bee here. That is how you can know that this is the fourth title."

"Okay, sounds good." This was working. Atem was surprisingly a good teacher.

"And the last title is simple. It is the name of the Pharaoh." He pointed at the cartouche that represented his name.

"That's your name?"

He nodded.

I looked at it for a moment before looking at him, "how do you write Ramesses II's name?"

He started to draw the entire title, when he was done, he turned it back to me, "like this. Why?"

I smiled, "cause he's my favourite Pharaoh."

Atem hesitated before narrowing his eyes, "why is *he* your favourite pharaoh?"

"Because he's cool. And he's Ramesses the Great after all."

Atem put down his pencil, "he was also married to twenty women and had a hundred children."

"And his first wife was his favourite wife who he dedicated a beautiful tomb too," I sighed, "so romantic!"

Atem continued to stare at me with narrowed eyes, "you are ridiculous."

"Why, you jealous that he's my favourite Pharaoh and you aren't?"

He stood up, "hardly. I couldn't care less," he stepped away and pushed in his chair, "are we done or do you need more help?"

I chuckled, "yeah," I smiled at him, "thanks Atem, you were a great help."

He just walked away without saying another word.

I always thought Atem was smart. I mean, he picked up reading and writing in English with such ease that I couldn't have thought otherwise even if I wanted too.

But it was after this that I really realized just how smart he was.

He had *so much* knowledge.

In the span of two days, without any help from notes or anything, he

practically recited half of the history of Egypt to me, telling me *everything*. Literally. From the important parts of a Pharaoh's reign to the way each Pharaoh looked like.

I didn't know anyone who could recite the entire history of my country.

I mean, I probably couldn't even tell you how our current political leader looked like.

That took smarts.

And it was kind of admirable... and I couldn't deny that it motivated me to study harder.

Which was exactly what I did.

I shrunk down my really long notes for the next couple hours, then studied for a bit longer, then went to sleep.

The next morning was my exam, and I went in feeling confident.

After writing it, I practically ran home.

Atem opened the door for me since I forgot to pack my keys that morning, but when he opened it, he was greeted by a grinning May.

He started to smile when he saw my grin, "how was it?"

My grin grew, "totally aced it."

His smile grew too, "good."

I gave him a quick hug, not really finding it so embarrassing anymore, "thanks so much! I feel like with your tutoring I'm gonna ace the course!"

It would be the first and only A I got this entire year.

He patted on my back before I let go, "I'm glad to hear that."

"But," I continued, "all of this talking about history made me realize how little I know about you."

He let out a huff as he walked to the kitchen, "what are you talking about? You know my life story."

"Well yeah," I said as I followed him, "but like... when's your birthday?"

The last thing I studied before the exam was the Egyptian calendar. I didn't ask Atem for help on that because it was fairly straightforward.

Their year was divided into three seasons with four months in each season and thirty days in each month. That was 360 days and the missing 5 days was added to the end of the year as holidays.

But studying this made me realize that I didn't know Atem's birthday.

How could you be close to someone without knowing their birthday?

"Did you celebrate birthdays back then?" I asked as I sat at the island while Atem grabbed something to eat.

"Yes," he said, "we do. You can imagine though, that as Pharaoh, the celebration was grand."

"Oh, sounds like fun!"

"Not really," Atem said, "I don't particularly like big parties."

Oh yeah, I forgot that he didn't like loud places.

"So when is your birthday?"

He opened his mouth to answer but then closed it, "hold on, let me figure it out in your time."

I was grateful.

If he said something like, "I was born on the twenty ninth day of the third month of Akhet," I wouldn't have gotten him.

Obviously.

(But you can probably tell from the knowledge of the Egyptian calendar that I

just showed you as my guess of what he might say that I really did totally ace this exam.)

"Peret..." He said to himself, looking up as he thought.

Peret was the growth season, which translated to about January to April.

If his birthday was in March or April than we didn't miss it this year.

"The ninth day of March." He said.

"March ninth?" I repeated, "oh! We've got like, two weeks till your birthday!"

He shrugged.

"We should have a party!"

"No thanks."

I rolled my eyes, "don't you wanna see how birthday parties in our world are like?"

"No thanks."

I frowned, "so what, you're going to be twenty-three?"

"Yes."

"Wow, you're so old." I'm still 18, jeeze. Well, I was gonna turn 19 soon but still.

Atem smiled at that.

"So I guess we're gonna throw a big party for you—"

"No thanks," he repeated.

I frowned.

Well, whether he liked it or not, I was gonna throw him a birthday party.

I already told him that I was gonna force him to live a little. And living a little consisted of having a birthday party.

I spent the next couple days planning out how I was going to have this party. I loved planning parties for friends, so I had no problem with doing this.

Obviously, it was going to be Ancient Egyptian Themed. I'd have to get blue and gold streamers.

The cake was gonna be a King Tut Mask. It was going to be super hard... but what was the point of being good at making cakes if I didn't use it on my friends, right?

And since he didn't like big parties... I would invite Ro, Alec, Blake, Grandma Seetha and Uncle Ethan. That would be a small party.

Grandma Seetha would be honoured if I asked her to cook a meal for us that day, so I would ask her.

And all we'd do would be cut cake and watch a movie. That would be good enough.

Gosh, was I excited.

HEY GUYS!!

Hope you enjoyed the chapter! I thought I would let you know that I'll be uploading another chapter later today as a THANK YOU FOR ALL THE SUPPORT!!!!

ALSO, I wanted to put in a sort of disclaimer... in terms of Egyptian history, obviously I'm having a little fun here and moulding it to fit the story. Most of the facts I use are true, but since Akhenatem is not an

historically real Pharaoh, I had to allow myself to have some fun with it. So please allow yourself to also have some fun and accept any inaccuracies you might see ;) Remember, this IS fiction! xD

*******LASTLY, THIS IS THE IMPORTANT PART*******

I've done this in my previous stories and it's always SO MUCH FUN!!! So I wanted to do it again in this one, especially since some of you have already started to wonder some awesome things ;D

SO, POST ANY QUESTION YOU WANT TO ASK AKHENATEM OR MAY (or any other character) BELOW IN THE COMMENTS AND I WILL ASK THEM TO ANSWER THE QUESTION FOR YOU in the next chapter or the chapter after! ;D

Obviously this is just for fun, so have fun and ask anything!! (Obviously not TOO plot related, I don't want to give away the story ;D)

Maybe you have a question of how Atem's life was in Egypt or what May's favourite cake flavour is... ASK AWAY!

hehe, again, HAVE FUN!!! I know I will! I absolutely LOVE reading what you all have to say so thanks again and see you in the next upload!! (I think you guys will REALLY LIKE the next upload ;D)

Love,

Luckycharms <3

My Social Media!



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mathiyalagan

Chapter 22 - [Beauty and the Birthday Kiss]

HEY GUYS!!

I really hope you enjoy this chapter (I think you will ;D)! And don't forget to let me know what you think!

Also, just a reminder that if you want, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO ASK A QUESTION TO ATEM OR MAY!! =D I will have the answers in the next upload!

They can be as silly as: What's your favourite food? To as detailed as: What was the nicest thing your dad ever did for you when you were a kid?

It's just for fun! haha!

THANKS AND ENJOY! <3

-Luckycharms <3



I had two weeks to plan this party... but obviously I waited till the last three days.

Thankfully, I had already called the guests and told them to keep March the ninth free. It was on a Saturday, so everyone was most definitely free.

Making the King Tut cake *and* going to school was the hardest part. I lied to Atem, saying that I had to work on a project and instead went to Grandma Seetha's cake shop in the evenings after he was done his shift to work on the cake.

Grandma Seetha gave me some tips on how to shape the cake, since carving it to be the right shape was *super, super* hard.

But I kept telling myself that if the Ancient Egyptians were able to mold that thing out of molten gold... I could do it with cake.

And it worked out.

Though I did get some help, I pretty much did it all by myself.

Fondant was so much fun to work with... but I had *never* used or made gold fondant before.

And when I was working on the gold part, Grandma Seetha was fast asleep so I had to experiment for a *long* time. Finally, thanks to the help of the internet, I decided to paint yellow fondant with gold paint I made by mixing a special edible dust with some alcohol.

It turned out fantastic. The blue was easy, which I also painted with some blue dust and alcohol.

The tough parts were the details. I was a perfectionist when it came to my cakes... and a King Tut mask was way too perfect already. There was no way I could allow myself to mess this up.

The eyes, the beard, the collar, the cobra and the falcon (who I knew now were Nekhbet and Wadjet). It took me *hours*.

Hours and hours and hours and seriously, waiting for the last three days to do it was a *bad* idea.

But once it was done, at ten-fifty-six in the evening on March eighth... I couldn't have been happier.

It was the most beautiful cake I had ever made in my entire life.

In fact... I could even say that it was the most beautiful cake I had ever seen in my entire life... if I do say so myself.

I boxed it up and carefully took it home. It was super heavy so I had to walk really slow, but it was still cold outside which sucked.

But hey, once Atem saw this cake, it would be totally worthwhile.

I was too excited to wait till the party to show him the cake, so I decided that I would show him the cake and wish him a happy birthday at midnight and also give him my birthday gift. But we would cut the cake and enjoy it at the party later that day.

When I got home, Atem was thankfully still awake.

He was lying on the couch, Neferkiti curled up asleep on his chest while he read yet *another* book.

"Hey, almost birthday boy!" I said as I rushed to the fridge to put the cake in before he asked me any questions about it.

"How was working on your project?"

"Great!" I said, "it's finally done and it looks *amazing*!"

He sat up, grabbing Neferkiti as she rolled into his arms, still sleeping, "can I see it?"

I hesitated sort of panicking because the cake wouldn't fit in the fridge, "later."

"What are you doing?"

"Just..." I moved literally everything onto one shelf of the fridge, freeing an entire shelf for the cake and it just *barely* fit, "food."

Atem raised an eyebrow.

Then I looked at the time and sighed. There was like, only five minutes till twelve and there was no need for me to have been struggling.

But anyways, I closed the fridge and went to my room, "I'm going to bed. Goodnight!"

"Goodnight," he said as he leaned against the couch and continued to read.

I closed my bedroom door, fished out my small birthday gift and waited till the clock struck twelve.

When it did, I barged out of my room and practically screamed "Happy Birthday!"

Loud enough to startle him into dropping his book and startle Neferkiti awake, but not loud enough to bother any neighbors.

He groaned, "I *knew* you were going to do something like that..." he muttered.

I chuckled returning to the fridge and grabbing the cake before I joined him at the couch.

I placed the cake on the coffee table, still in its box, and then wrapped my arms tightly around his neck as I hugged him.

The annoyed Neferkiti jumped from Atem's lap and fell back asleep at the corner of the couch.

"Happy twenty-third birthday, you old man," I said as I swayed from side to side, moving him too.

"Okay, *okay*," he responded, "you're choking me."

"Stop being a wuss," I said as I pulled away, "now, wanna see what I've been working so diligently on for the last few days."

"I knew it..."

I frowned, a little disappointed that my lie was a bad one, "do you want to see it or not?"

To my surprise, he smiled, "fine."

I grinned back at him, which, for whatever reason, made his smile grow slightly. And then I carefully opened up the box, revealing the absolutely beautiful cake.

I watched his face and saw the amazement.

Oh yeah, I thought proudly, *that was the face I was hoping for*.

"This is... food?" he carefully touched the gold part of the mask.

I nodded, "I know you don't really like sweet stuff, so I used honey cake instead of vanilla or chocolate. Of course, the fondant is super sweet but you can take that off... I'll eat it for you if anything."

He stared at it in awe, "How on earth..."

I was beaming. "Do you like it?"

"It's magnificent."

Oh gosh, now I was blushing, "I'm so glad! It was so hard to make, you know?"

"You are truly an artist," he said as he touched the details of the collar, "to be able to do this with food."

I laughed, "oh, stop! You're embarrassing me." Though I had to admit, I loved it. This was the most he's ever complimented me at once.

"You did it all on your own?"

"Yup!" But after I said that, I felt bad, cause technically that was a lie, "well, Grandma Seetha helped me with the nose... the nose was really hard."

He let out a small laugh. "I don't even want to eat it."

"Well, you can't yet anyways," I said, making him look at me, "I know you said you don't like parties, but I'm throwing you a small party anyways."

Atem rolled his eyes.

"The cake is for that," I continued, "but I was super excited and really wanted to show you since I worked hard on it."

He sighed, "well, thank you."

"There's one more thing," I smiled as I picked up the small envelope with a bow stuck on it and handed it to him.

"What is it?" He asked as he turned on the couch to face me completely.

"Open it, you goof."

He did as I said.

I crossed my legs on the couch and smiled as he pulled out the small card with my universities logo on it.

"A... card?"

I laughed, "it's a library card!"

"A library card?" He looked at me.

I nodded, "now you can go to my schools library whenever you want and borrow books!"

"Oh..."

I sighed, "you wont get how awesome of a gift this is until you actually see the library," I said, "it's huge! It's literally called the best library in the country!"

"Really?" He put an arm on the back of the couch and rested his head on it as he listened to me speak.

"Yeah!" I continued, "there are fifteen floors and each floor is *filled* with books."

"How big are the floors?"

"Probably like, twenty times the size of this apartment!"

His eyes slowly widened, "really?"

I nodded.

"And all of these are filled with books?"

I nodded again, "And you wanna know what's even better? The ninth floor has all the Egypt stuff on it, and it even has a bunch of *actual* documents from your time. Well, they're copies of the actual thing, but whatever. They're written in hieroglyphs and everything! The problem is that you can't actually bring those home... but you can sit and read them there!"

"There's a floor about Egypt?"

I nodded. "Books galore," I said with a grin.

His smile started to grow.

"As soon as we wake up in the morning, I'll give you a tour of the library. It isn't far away at all so you could go there on your own whenever I'm not home."

"Well, good," he said, "I guess you can say I'm excited."

I let out a small laugh and gave him a light push, "you are such a loser."

He kept smiling, "what exactly are the plans for later today?"

"Well, we're going to wake up in the morning and go check out this library. I don't think that'll take longer than an hour or so. Then we have to go to the mall to buy you a nice outfit to wear for the party... actually, I should get myself something too." I mean, I needed a new dress, "Then we'll do some grocery shopping..." I looked away and started to stroke my chin as I thought, "then I'll start decorating at four-ish... since the guest will be here around six. Grandma Seetha's coming around four too since she's gonna be doing the c—"

I kind of saw it coming.

But I had no idea what he was doing so I just kept talking as I watched him lean closer to me.

Suddenly, however, when his lips touched mine, I froze.

I froze for a good five seconds before I jerked my head away in shock and stared at him with wide eyes.

My heart was beating so loudly that not only could I hear it myself but I could also feel it thumping in my throat, the thumps resonating into my cheeks.

And did I even need to mention how hot my face was?

He opened his eyes and gave me an annoyed look.

"What..." it came out as a whisper, "did you just do?"

He closed his eyes tightly for a moment and sighed before looking back at me, "I thought you said you liked me."

If my face could burn off, it would have burnt off by now. "I... do."

"Than *what* is the problem?"

I swallowed, trying to clear my throat, "you can't... you don't just..." I wanted to scream.

He let out a breath and just stared at me, as if waiting for me to tell him what the problem was.

I took a deep breath, "that was my first kiss!" I said, raising my voice, "we're supposed to date first! And then after a couple dates we're supposed to kiss! But you just went right ahead and stole my first kiss away from me!"

"*Stole*?" He narrowed his eyes.

I placed my hands on my burning cheeks, "you can't just lean in and kiss a girl without any warning!" I said, "That's not how I imagined my first kiss to be!"

"Are you seriously upset that—"

"I imagined candles and stuff... it's *supposed* to be romantic!" I looked at him, "not with you kissing me out of nowhere and then *glaring* at me! That's—"

Suddenly, his entire hand was covering my entire face. "Be quiet," he said.

I grabbed his arm with both my hands and pulled his hand away from my face, "do you think that doing this *helps*?" I squeaked.

He held a finger over his lips, "just be quiet and listen to me."

I really had nothing else to say.

So I shut myself up.

"If you want this to be romantic than fine," he said, "you are a nice girl... and—"

"That is *not* romantic—"

"*Don't* interrupt me."

"Well try harder then."

"You want me to try harder? Fine." He sat up straight and stared deeply at me. "Thank you for the birthday wishes," he started, "thank you for everything. I may not act like it but I am greatly appreciative for what you have done for me."

That was nice and all... but it wasn't exactly romantic. But I didn't say anything. I just let him continue.

"That being said... I don't like your world. Your world is lifeless and boring and filled with lazy people and noise in the nights and silence in the morning," my eyebrows rose as he spoke, "and the weather is horrendous and no one here believes in magic or the gods or how valuable and precious life is."

Okay. Now I just had no idea what he was actually getting at.

"Your people live such... repetitive, soulless lives. I walk down the roads and not a single person looks my way or even *smiles*. Back in Egypt, strangers would stop each other and talk to one another. Everyone smiled simply to spread happiness. People were happy. I mean, I never really experienced such an interaction but that was because people feared me. That's why they didn't look at *me* or smile at *me*. Here, however, it seems to be because everyone has some sort of arrogance. A dislike for people they don't even know."

"Atem—"

"And this world... it's so... superficial. Superficial and filled with cowards. And to make up for it, your people write stories and have T.V. shows to make people forget that there aren't enough real heroes and brave souls in this world. You satisfy yourself with your imagination, which is beautiful in a sense, but not enough."

"Atem—"

"The wizard was right to send me here," he said, "I have finally come to understand how superior of a nation my nation really was... how great my people were. I believe have learned my lesson... but I'm stuck here. That is my curse. I am stuck in this place that I *hate*."

"This is *not*—"

"But," he cut me off, "despite everything I have said about your land... despite

coming to understand it so much over the many months I have been here... the one thing I don't understand is why I found myself here with *you*."

Okay...

I had to admit, the way he said that made my heart skip a beat.

"Out of every singly human being in this world, I landed here with you and that makes no sense to me," he sighed, closing his eyes for a moment and then opening them to look at me again, "because... no matter how much I hate this land of yours... I cannot deny that... since my father passed on... I have never been... happier."

My eyes widened a bit.

"I don't show it... because that is just who I am. And you cannot expect me to show it either. But I can tell you that I have encountered many women in my life and none of them make me feel as confused as you do."

I smiled.

"You are extremely annoying—" of course, my smile faded, "—you are very indecisive and you worry a lot about stupid things."

"Thanks, Atem." Sarcasm, of obviously.

"And you never let me finish what I'm trying to say."

"Sorry."

He smiled a small smile, "If I met you in Egypt... I wouldn't have looked twice in your direction," he said, "If, in Egypt, you had said the things you have said to me or did the things you have done to me here, I would have had you executed without a hesitation."

"Are you seriously trying—"

This time he covered my mouth with his hand, "which is exactly why you are so confusing to me. I don't understand my feelings towards you at all. I have never loved... or even truly liked a girl before," we were both blushing now. I could

see the red under his tan skin. He could probably feel mine since his hand was still on my face, "but what I do know is that *you* make me happy. Whether it's the stupid look you have on when you wake up in the morning or when you smile at me simply because you are just in a good mood... you make me happy."

After a moment of silence and just staring at each other, he pulled his hand away, "you can talk now."

I let out a breath and smiled at him, "you really suck at being romantic."

Atem frowned, but didn't deny it, "can't you be happy? I've just done something I've never done before in my life."

"I am happy," I said, truthfully, "I'm *really* happy."

He kept looking at me, staring at my face as if trying to figure out whether I really felt that way or if I were teasing him.

But I really *was* happy.

I looked down at my hands as I played with my fingers, not really knowing what to do or say.

Silence.

And awkwardness.

And then he spoke up, "hey."

There was a strange softness in his voice that made me look up at him.

"So, you've never kissed a man before this?"

"No."

He smirked, "well it's no wonder you're such a horrible kisser than."

I felt my cheeks burn as I gawked, "Wha..."

The smirk turned into a soft smile, "let me teach you."

"Like you're some sort of professional!" I argued.

"More of a professional than you are."

"Atem, you are such a jerk!"

"Just shut up and do as I say," he leaned in without another word but I pushed him back.

"You expect me to kiss you after you called me a bad kisser?"

He started to laugh.

Atem was laughing.

Like, *actually* laughing.

He had a nice laugh, which didn't help me in the situation.

And when he stopped laughing, he grabbed my arms and pulled me closer to him before resting my arms on his shoulders.

My heart was beating really hard and I was looking everywhere except his eyes. God, was this embarrassing.

It was especially embarrassing because I would never have imagined doing anything like this with *Akhenatem*. The evil Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt.

"Relax," he said to me, "everyone's first kiss is bad."

That didn't help me feel better. But his face was so close to mine that for the first time ever, I could feel the warmth of his breath on my skin... and that made it hard to think straight.

But that was enough to make me relax a little, lowering my shoulders and taking a deep breath.

"Close your eyes."

I licked my lips a little awkwardly, but closed my eyes.

"Open your lips up a bit."

My heartbeat skyrocketed at the thought of him staring at my lips. But I continued to do what he said.

"Good."

I expected him to kiss me again right then, but he didn't.

"Just let it happen," he said, softly and kindly, "it'll come."

And when he said that, I smiled.

But just as the smile formed on my face, he kissed me a second time.

He was right. I let it happen, and it came.

And it was the best thing I've ever felt in my life.

I always imagined that a kiss would feel good... Ro had told me all about up close and personal kisses.

But I never knew it would feel *this* good.

My heart was racing and it was so hard to breathe but at the same time, I felt so at ease.

I could forget everything else in the world for the short while that our lips touched and focus just on him.

On the fact that an Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, mean or not, was kissing me.

On his gorgeous, rare, laugh and his equally rare sweet smile.

On the oh so gentle side of him that only I was seemingly allowed to see.

But just as I was getting the hang of it, he pulled away.

I held back my urge to sigh, but opened my eyes.

He was looking straight at me with a small smile on his face.

Then he gave me a final peck on the lips and then he turned around and started to pick his book up, as if getting ready to leave.

I sat there, frozen.

That was how the kiss was going to end?

After shaking away my disorientation, I grabbed his arm. "Wait... that's it?" I didn't realize how silly that sounded though till after I said it.

"You want more?" He asked, teasingly, "maybe your neck, and then your chest?"

My face burned so much that the sweat on my forehead must have hissed into vapor. "I... I just..."

He chuckled before leaning back against the couch, hands behind his head. "A good first kiss, hmm?"

"No," I said, trying to be as blunt as he often was.

He was openly offended, looking at me with raised eyebrows.

And despite the fact that he was always extremely honest, I still felt bad and felt the need to immediately explain my answer. "The first kiss ended with you telling me I was a bad kisser," I said, quickly. "The second was good though."

He chuckled, "you'll have an entertaining story to tell now, though."

I sighed, initiating a moment of silence between the two of us.

But he broke it quickly. "You're a good kisser," he said, his gentleness returning.

I immediately smiled, though I was embarrassed. But I knew that his rare gentleness would vanish before I could say thank you. So instead, I went on to ask something else. "Does that mean I can kiss you whenever I want?"

He gave me a strange look before he answered slowly. "Yes," he said, his cheeks turning a barely noticeable red.

The thought was weirdly exciting, so I let out a happy sigh. "Promise?"

"Yes."

"Pinky promise?"

"...Yes"

"Cross your heart and hope to die?"

"Stop."

I giggled, hand over my mouth.

Clearly, that was all the gentleness that the birthday boy had to offer for this early morning.

Chapter 23 - [Beauty and the Shiver]

As promised, the next day Atem and I got ready to go to my universities library as soon as we woke up.

Despite the (in my opinion) severity of what happened last night between the birthday boy and I, he acted like nothing had changed.

But I wasn't going to have it.

I grabbed his hand as we walked towards the library, making him look at me.

"What are you doing?" He asked as he tried to pull his hand away.

"You're my boyfriend now," I said, "so you have to hold my hand."

Atem raised an eyebrow, "what?"

I tightened my grip on his hand, though he seemed to refuse to hold mine. "You're my boyfriend," I repeated, "so act like one."

"And *what* exactly is a *boyfriend* supposed to do?"

"Hold my hand, for one."

He rolled his eyes. "That's ridiculous."

"That's the rules of my land!" I argued.

"What kind of pathetic rules are those? You are *not* my mother. What is the need of holding hands?"

I scoffed, "what's that supposed to mean? You are such a dope!"

And though he still refused to hold my hand, I kept a tight hold of his.

As pretty much always, we argued for most of the walk until we actually got to the library. Because once we got to the library, he was too amazed just by looking at it from the outside to continue arguing with me.

It was, after all, massive.

I was quite familiar with this library, since I've seen it like, a bazillion times already. And to be honest, I'm sure he's seen it before too. You could see it from the balcony of my apartment.

But anyhow, I guided him to the elevator and took him straight up to the ninth floor. When the elevator opened, Atem was almost speechless.

I mean, I couldn't blame him. I was practically speechless when I first saw this place too. And I've seen modern day libraries before.

He hasn't.

I had to pull him out of the elevator before the doors closed, especially since there were people who were waiting to go up to a higher floor.

But then I set him free.

He spent a *long* time exploring, unable to believe that there were fifteen floors of this many books. Of course, since this was the Ancient Egypt floor, he enjoyed it even more.

This floor had a ton of books, but not just your average everyday books. Yeah, it had the journals and the history books and all those great books written by European men during the nineteen hundreds.

But it also had these massive books filled with massive photographs of the walls on Ancient Egyptian architecture. Of course, they weren't just plain walls! These walls had beautiful carvings and paints and all sorts of stuff.

There were also other books which had copies of other various primary documents from things as insignificant as a list that was once painted onto a broken pot piece, to something as fantabulous as an Ancient Egyptian Kings

letter to his son on how to be a good Pharaoh.

It was literally because of *this* floor of *this* library that both Aunty Maya and Uncle Ethan chose to do their undergraduate degree, graduate degree and PhD at Oakville University.

Pretty crazy, huh?

But anyways, Atem flipped through some of the texts and was clearly making a mental list of what to read next as he explored.

And though he clearly wanted to stay, I had to remind him that we needed to go shopping for clothes. So I grabbed a hold of his hand again, since he was my boyfriend after all, and then we made our way back to the elevator.

But just as we approached the elevator doors, I noticed Julian sitting at one of the study tables. He looked up almost at the same time that I noticed him and I waved with a smile.

I've been seeing him a lot, recently, haven't I?

He pulled his headphones out of his ears and waved back. "Hey," he said, rather loudly despite the fact that we were in a library.

Atem, who hadn't noticed him earlier, turned when he heard his voice.

I walked over to him, dragging Atem behind me. "Hey! Studying?"

"Yeah," he said, "midterms."

I smiled, "same."

"You here to study?"

I shook my head, "it's his birthday today," I pointed at Atem, "so we're having a party. No time to study today."

"You came to a library for your birthday, huh?" Julian asked Atem.

Atem simply smirked.

"Actually," I started, "I don't think you two have met?"

"We haven't," Julian said, "not formally, at least."

I smiled, "Julian, meet Atem. Atem, meet Julian. There."

Julian smiled, "it's nice to meet you. And happy birthday."

Atem just nodded.

I then noticed something.

I looked down between Atem and I and saw that for the first time since this morning, he had a firm grip on my hand.

Holding back the urge to roll my eyes, I looked back at Julian.

And then I saw that he was looking at our hands too.

"You two are together." It wasn't a question, but I nodded and laughed awkwardly. "Well. That's awkward," he said, probably referring to the fact that he asked me out in front of Atem.

I chuckled, again, awkwardly. "Anyways, we should get going. We've got a lot to do before the party."

"Yeah," Julian said with a smile, "have fun."

And with that, Atem and I hopped into the elevator.

But as the elevator doors closed, I noticed Julian staring right at us... and for some reason, a weird shiver went down my spine.

Shopping took longer than I expected since Atem was super picky and didn't like any of the outfits that all the fancy guy clothing stores had to offer. But we finally found something and after coming home and decorating, the guests were here before I knew it and the party started.

As weird as this sounds, I did Atem's hair for him, since he had no idea what

to do with it to make it look fancy. He kept trying to remind me that he spent most of his time in Egypt with almost no hair. Styling your hair was not necessary there.

I mean, I guess I didn't really know how to style it either, but Google and a little bit of hair gel did the trick. I ended up slicking it back just enough to get all the hair out of his face and I think I did a real good job. He looked great.

Plus, Ro said he looked stellar, which meant he looked fantastic because Ro wouldn't lie.

Now, about telling Ro and Alec about what happened between Atem and I that super early morning... well, I was thinking of saving that for later.

I wasn't particularly ready to tell Uncle Ethan about it... and besides, nothing was really confirmed yet... right?

I kept telling Atem that he was my boyfriend now... but we hadn't actually confirmed it yet. And I didn't want everyone to know about it until I was sure of it myself.

So we had our party.

Atem thought the entire tradition was weird but we forced him to blow out the candles on his cake after we sang the Happy Birthday Song, and then we cut cake and ate it. (Though I must admit that cutting through my hard work was heart wrenching.)

But I guess that's what cakes are made for, right? Eating.

And everyone thought the cake was wonderful! Before it was cut and after it was cut too. That's all that mattered.

After that, a great time was had by all. We ate food, played games and had fun during this small party.

While Ro, Grandma Seetha and I sat on the couch and talked about girl things, Uncle Ethan watched while Atem, Blake and Alec played videogames on the floor.

Of course, like most parties... something crazy was always meant to happen.

And this party was going to be no different.

"So, what did May get you for your birthday?" Alec asked Atem as he tried to kick Blake's butt on Super Smash Bros.

Though Atem tried his best as Link, (who was his favourite character because apparently Link looked most respectable) he still wasn't that great at the game so he had already lost. "A library card."

Alec and Blake stopped playing the game and both looked at Atem. And then at me.

"You got him a *library card*?" Alec asked with a chuckle.

I rolled my eyes, "it's a *valuable* gift."

"I'm quite pleased with it," Atem said, "that library is *massive*."

I nodded my head, completely agreeing.

Uncle Ethan simply chuckled.

"I never imagined Atem would be so... not materialistic," Alec said.

"I don't see what's so surprising," Atem said, "in Egypt, we don't exactly have such a vast collection of literature."

"Huh," Blake said, looking at Atem, "what do you mean by that?"

Oh man. I had to stop this conversation. Blake didn't know the truth about Atem and if Atem kept going, he could say something exceptionally weird.

"Well, in Egypt, we tell our stories orally, since most of my people are illiterate—"

"He means—"

"Interesting," Uncle Ethan said, interrupting me, "but there is a power in the spoken word, I believe."

Everyone looked at him.

"I believe the Ancient Egyptians had that power... to tell stories beautifully."

Blake raised an eyebrow and I rolled my eyes, "oh Uncle Ethan," I chuckled awkwardly, "we're talking about modern Egypt, not ancient."

Uncle Ethan seemed to immediately understand, "oh," he too chuckled awkwardly, "yes. I'm sorry. I'm still thinking about a paper I have to write."

I smiled at him as Blake looked back at Atem, "so Egypt really is a poor country right now?"

"Poor?" Atem snorted, "Egypt is anything but poor. It is the greatest country that exists. It is superior to all its neighbors—"

"Yes, the literacy rate in Egypt right now is pretty decent," Uncle Ethan said, now probably trying to help me get Atem to stop.

"But Atem just said—"

"So how 'bout that cake?" Ro suddenly said, rather loudly.

We all looked at her.

"Fantastic, huh?" She grinned, "Atem, you didn't seem too surprised though, I had to admit."

"She already showed it to me at midnight."

Well, at least Ro managed to change the subject. All the boys almost immediately returned to the game while Ro spoke.

Ro scoffed, "you started the party without us?" She asked me.

I laughed, "no! I just showed him the cake, I promise."

"And then she proclaimed that I am to be her boyfriend," Atem suddenly said, "holding hands and stuff... huh... pathetic."

Silence filled the room as my cheeks started to burn.

And the gaming had stopped yet again.

And everyone was looking at me.

Grandma Seetha, who had remained quiet for most of the current conversation spoke first, "well, *finally!*" She said, "I was wondering when you two would start dating."

I wanted to kick Atem real hard, and since he was sitting right at my feet, I probably could have gotten away with it too but that wouldn't have made the situation any better.

Ro grabbed me aggressively, "*what?*"

I felt horrible, "I... I was going to tell you, I swear—"

"*It's true?*" She practically shrieked.

Blake laughed.

Well... I guess he definitely saw it coming.

"May!" Ro continued, "how could you not tell me? *Me?*"

"I swear, Ro, I was going to tell you!" I said, "just once I figured it all out myself."

I glanced over at Atem, who didn't seem to care one bit that my best friend was upset with me.

Jerk.

She kept this going for a little while until Alec calmed her down with a glance.

It was a glance that was directed at my uncle, who stood up to get his car ready to drop Grandma Seetha home.

And then Ro understood.

She sighed, and then stopped arguing with me and then we said one Uncle

Ethan left we decided to call it a night and everyone else headed out too.

Once they were all gone, I closed the door and put my hands on my hips, "way-to-go, Akhenatem!" I hissed.

He looked up from the cake which he was putting back into the refrigerator, "what?"

"Why did you tell everyone, you jerk?"

Atem straightened himself up, "excuse me?"

I rolled my eyes, "Uncle Ethan is probably freaking out—"

"You allow yourself to walk around in public grasping tightly onto my hand but you refuse to tell your blood about the fact that I am your so called *boyfriend*?"

I hesitated. Okay. He had a point. "But I didn't want to tell any of them until I was ready!"

"Ready?" Atem asked, "ready for *what* exactly?"

"Dating is a *big* deal, Atem!"

Atem shook his head in annoyance, "dear lord, woman you are such a nuisance."

I was about to argue with him but I heard my phone begin to ring. It was sitting on the island in the kitchen, so I grabbed it and saw that it was Uncle Ethan calling.

I sighed.

Uh oh.

"Hey Uncle Ethan," I said right when I answered the call.

"Hey, princess," my Uncle responded, "I left my bag in your front closet... can you bring it down for me? I'm on my way back so I'll wait for you near the front door?"

I hesitated, "sure."

"Thanks, love."

I took a deep breath and noticed Atem watching from his door. "Thanks a lot." I said to him as I grabbed my uncles bag and left the apartment.

After riding down the elevator and taking a deep breath, I walked down to the lobby of the building and smiled at my uncle who was indeed waiting for me.

"Thank you, princess," he said as he took the bag from me, "I'm sorry for the hassle."

"Don't be silly," I said as I rolled my eyes, "it's no hassle at all. I'll see you later?" I guess I wanted to get away as soon as possible.

"Actually," my uncle started, "I wanted to talk to you."

I held back my sigh.

I *knew* it.

"This is going to be just as awkward for me as it's going to be for you."

Now I sighed out loud, but my uncle smiled.

"If you had dated someone prior to this... Im sure you would have told me by now, right?"

I nodded.

"So Atem's your first boyfriend?"

"Well..." I started, "to be honest, he's not *exactly* my boyfriend. We really haven't put a name on it yet... but yeah... I guess."

He nodded slowly, "I just..." he sighed, "I'm not going to tell you that Atem's a bad person. Because your aunty wouldn't like at and because he's *not*. We both know that."

I shifted my weight to one of my legs and started to tap my toe on the ground.

"But I *will* remind you of where he comes from."

Ancient Egypt. I know.

"He's from a completely different culture from us and though love and romance and things like that *did* exist there... I want to remind you that this young man was a *Pharaoh*."

I nodded and looked at the ground, "I know..."

"And Pharaoh's aren't exactly known for being monogamous."

I guess I knew that true.

"And again, I'm not saying he's a bad person or anything. I'm just saying that I think you should be wary. Make sure you are certain that he is truly serious about any sort of feeling he has for you prior to you allowing yourself to become serious about him," Uncle Ethan said, "does that sound fair?"

I nodded.

Uncle Ethan wasn't wrong. He had complete reason to worry about me and my choices... especially in regards to Atem.

If anyone knew anything about Egypt from an outsider looking in perspective... it was Uncle Ethan.

And I was certain that he was looking out for me, so how could I be annoyed or angry with his words.

He smiled at me and then gave me a light punch on the shoulder. "You're a smart girl," he said, "I know you won't let yourself get played or anything like that... but I also know that you're very kind hearted, May."

I looked at him.

"I'm just worried that you're going to let that kind side get the better of you. It's always good to see the best in people... but never let the good things about someone blind you of the flaws," he said, "there's nothing wrong with being careful."

I nodded again.

"Besides, if you're not worried about the whole Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh thing... at least remind yourself that he's a man," Uncle Ethan gave me a funny grin, "and take it from me... boys at his age aren't particularly bright about what a girl wants and needs in a relationship. I used to drive your Aunty Maya crazy."

I chuckled at that.

He smiled and then reached up and messed up my hair a little, "be careful. Okay?"

I nodded, "thanks for looking out for me, Uncle Ethan."

He let out a small laugh, "well, if your father isn't going to do it, *someone* has to, right?"

I laughed too.

"Feel free to give me a call if you need anything, love."

"I will, promise."

"Alright then," he patted my shoulder, "I'll see you soon."

And after waving him off, I returned to my apartment room feeling pretty fine.

Because yeah, that was kind of an awkward conversation...

But never in my life have I ever felt like I had a real, *loving* father until that moment.

And it felt pretty good.

I went to sleep that night feeling pretty happy, despite the fact that I had had a very awkward encounter with my uncle and my grandmother and my friends.

But then I woke up in the middle of the night.

I wasn't usually someone who woke up in the middle of the night. I was often

a real deep sleeper and once I was asleep, you'd only see my eyes open when it was actually time for me to wake up.

But tonight, I randomly woke up in the middle of the night.

I found myself unable to fall asleep after that, so I got up and decided to go grab myself a glass of hot chocolate. Hot chocolate always helped me fall asleep.

After getting out of bed and making my way to the kitchen, I stopped by Atem's room and peeked in. His bedroom door was almost always closed when he slept, but today it was open.

He was sleeping on his side, his back towards me and his face towards the wall, one hand underneath the pillow and the other in front of him. And after noticing Neferkiti curled up in a ball next to him, I felt a tinge of jealousy and slightly closed his door.

Neferkiti usually took turns sleeping with us... but I did notice that she seemed to prefer sleeping with Atem, though my bed was a lot bigger.

So after stepping away from his room, I made my way to the kitchen and made myself some hot chocolate.

But just as I turned off the lights of the kitchen, I heard a rattle coming from behind me.

It sounded kind of like the noise that Neferkiti would make when she jumped onto the tables. So I immediately thought it was Neferkiti but then I realized it couldn't have been. I just saw her fast asleep in Atem's bedroom.

A mouse, maybe?

But whatever it was, I turned around and stared cautiously into the darkness. I mean, it wasn't that dark. The light of the digital clock underneath the T.V. lit up the room a tiny bit. And of course, there were the lights coming from the window too.

But it was dark enough for me to notice something strange.

I squinted and stepped forward towards the corner of the living room, trying

to figure out what that strange thing was.

I couldn't even tell you what I saw... it was too dark... it was just... *something*.

You know when you turn off the light and your eyes are adjusting to the darkness and you see weird splotches?

It was kind of like that.

Suddenly, I heard a hissing sound.

The hiss came from behind me and I jumped and gasped as I turned around only to see Neferkiti.

She continued to hiss at something as I kept my hand over my heart to calm myself down, "Gosh, Neferkiti, you scared me." However, she ignored my presence entirely and continued to hiss.

Maybe it was a mouse.

But when I followed her gaze and looked back at the corner, I let out a gasp, dropping my glass onto the ground and stepping back quickly.

Red eyes.

I saw red eyes.

They disappeared quickly. Almost as if I had imagined it entirely.

But just as my glass shattered on the floor, I found myself tripping over my backpack, which I had carelessly left on the floor and falling onto the cold, hard ground. Right on my tailbone.

The shattering of the glass on the ground was unbelievably loud, breaking the silence of the night and causing the burning hot chocolate to burn my legs since I pretty much fell right into it.

I heard Atem come running, "May?" I heard him call.

I tried to get up, but couldn't. And right when Atem joined me, kneeling down in front of me and grabbing me by my shoulders, I snapped back into my sense.

"What happened?"

"I..." I hesitated, "Sorry... I just saw..."

"What?" He, for whatever reason, began to shake me.

The wizard?

No way.

"I dunno... I just freaked out... I'm fine." I said, trying to get up.

Atem helped me up as I tried to get a control of my breathing.

Neferkiti had stopped her hissing and was looking worriedly at both Atem and I.

I rubbed my back and winced, wondering if it was possible for me to break my hipbone at my age. "Sorry for waking you up, Atem."

"It's fine," he simply said, "go back to bed. I will clean up the mess."

"No, it's okay. I'll do it."

He practically pushed me back to my room, "go to bed."

Then he shut the door behind me and left me alone.

So I walked to my bed, sat down and then felt a shiver run down my spine as I grabbed a hold of Aunty Maya's necklace.

Was that... really the wizard?

Could it be?

No... the wizard... was dead, right? Atem killed him.

I put my hand on my head and fell back in my bed, ignoring the stinging pain in my back.

It was my imagination. It *had* to be.

But nonetheless, I obviously had no sleep that night.



Chapter 24 - [Beauty and the Loving Aunt]

I didn't tell Atem what craziness I saw the night before, mostly because I didn't want to freak him out. However, there *was* another reason for why I wasn't telling him... I was sure there was, but I couldn't figure it out.

Anyways, I wasn't feeling particularly good the next morning cause I barely slept. My stomach, for some strange reason, was turning the entire time in nervousness.

I didn't *actually* think that I saw the wizard... did I?

I mean, that was practically impossible. I watched Atem kill him!

Was I so ignorant to the power of magic to realize that bringing people back to life was possible?

No... that's ridiculous.

But then again, a year ago I would have said time traveling Pharaoh's were ridiculous too.

As I pondered the possibility of my ignorance to magic, Atem walked into my room with my massive, red hot water bag.

It was purchased a couple years ago specifically because every month, on the second day of 'that time of the month,' my uterus felt like it was going to rip right out of my tummy. A nice, hot water bag on my belly would always reduce the pain.

But I had used it on Atem when he once hit his head against the cupboard in the kitchen because I left it open, and so now he knew about it.

So yeah, he walked into my room, hot water bag in hand, and spoke to me with his usual annoyed look, "is your back still hurting?"

"Kind of," I said. After washing my face and eating breakfast, I had returned to bed because of that weird nervousness still in my belly. I guess I shouldn't be surprised that Atem thought it was because of my back.

I didn't like this feeling.

It was kind of like the feeling I would get when I found out that my marks were up. Or the feeling you get right before an exam.

Ugh, it was so uncomfortable.

The slight throb in my back was nothing in comparison to what was going on in my stomach.

And the worst part was, I couldn't understand it.

"Turn around then, and put this on your back," Atem said.

I did as he said, turning myself around so that I was lying on my front on my bed.

Atem sat next to me on my bed, placed the bag on my back and patted it a couple times before looking down at me, "what exactly was it that startled you last night, May?"

I swallowed back some of that nervousness. "It could have been a mouse," I lied.

"A mouse? Is that something you people are afraid of? Tiny, harmless mice?"

"Mice are pretty scary!" I argued, "they can be vicious!"

"Oh, dear Ra, you're pathetic," he put his legs up on my bed despite insulting me.

I sighed and turned my head away from him, resting it on my pillow, "god, I'm so tired."

"But you just woke up."

I didn't say anything to that. Instead, I stared at the wall and thought of a way to change the topic and feel better.

But instead, I did exactly the opposite.

I looked back at Atem, "how crazy is magic in your world?"

"Crazy?" He looked down at me. He was leaning against my headboard and I only now noticed that he had a book in his hands.

"Like... were there people in your world who could bring people back to life?"

"Only the gods could bring people back to life."

"Only the gods?"

Atem nodded, "in the afterlife, of course."

"So... a wizard or witch or sorcerer couldn't bring someone back to life?"

"No. That should not be possible," he said, "even the goddess Isis was unable to completely bring her husband Osiris back to life. She managed to bring him back to life just long enough to conceive baby Horus but then Osiris passed on to the underworld. If Isis couldn't do it, no simple being should be able to."

I looked at him and then looked back down at my bed covers, "oh."

"Why do you ask?"

I shrugged, "just curious, I guess."

Atem didn't say anything for a moment, then when he spoke up, I was a little surprised.

"Does this have anything to do with your aunt?"

I hesitated.

Did it?

Was that why I felt this weird nervousness inside me?

It was kind of random and out of the blue... but it could have been because of my aunt.

"When did your aunt pass on?"

"It'll be three years ago in April. April fifth," I sighed immediately after I said it.

"What happened to her?"

"It was a car accident," I said. "On a Friday night. And it was raining and she was coming home from work and a drunk driver drove his car right into her side of the car. She survived for a couple days after but wasn't able to hold on too long." I bit my lip for a moment and then continued, "then she was gone."

"Drunk driver..."

"Yeah," I sighed, "she didn't deserve to die."

"Most people don't," Atem remarked. He then went silent for a moment, as if thinking about what he just said, then he continued. "Tell me about her."

"Why?" I asked, looking at him, "since when did you care?"

He rolled his eyes. "You're the one who always says that talking about it helps," he said, but then his expression softened. "Besides, I'm curious to know who she is. She seems to have known everything about me though I know nothing of her."

I smiled at him, a little happy that he wanted to know more about Aunty Maya. I could talk about her for days if someone would let me. "She was fantastic. Like... everything I dream of being when I'm older," I started, "she was smart and pretty and kind... and she had this great sense of humor. She laughed at practically everything."

"When did she join your family?"

"When I was a kid. I knew her most of my life because she and Uncle Ethan started dating when they were young," I said. "She brought a lot into my life, you know. She made me start to appreciate the little things."

"Really?"

I nodded, "and I really didn't have a great role model as a child. My parents weren't *bad* parents. I mean, I'm certain that there are thousands around the world who have it worse than I do. But my mother was busy and never around and my father was... the guy we know today. When she became a part of my life, she really taught me what it's like to be... a good person."

Atem simply watched me, waiting for me to continue.

"Her father died when she was young, from cancer... and she always told me that he loved her and cherished her and made her who she was despite the fact that he was always so sick. And she passed on all that stuff to me.

"Obviously she saw this contrast between her parents and my own... which is probably why she worked so hard to make me happy. To take on the role of my parents so that I could experience what it was like to have a mother who really was there for me."

"Did you consider her a mother?"

I nodded. "She really was. There were lots of times when I would accidentally call her mom," I let out a chuckle. "I think it flattered her every time though."

"How did your parents feel about that?" He asked, shifting slightly so that he was facing me more.

I started to frown, "my parents... and my uncles entire family, to be honest, didn't like Aunt Maya much at all."

"I thought you said she was a good woman."

"She was," I said, "but it was Aunt Maya's free spirit and confidence that gave Uncle Ethan the guts to get out of law and do what he adored. Uncle Ethan's a lot like me, you know... he didn't want to do law, but that's what his entire family tried to force him into. Thanks to Aunt Maya though, he changed his mind and look at him now, a professor of Egyptology."

And as I was talking, I suddenly remembered something, "After she got hit my the car, she was in the hospital for a while and I remember overhearing my

grandfather tell my uncle that he knew he shouldn't have married her."

Atem raised an eyebrow, "harsh."

"I know," I said. "I absolutely hated my grandfather at that moment..."

And then I suddenly sat up, letting the hot water bag fall off of me while I faced Atem and crossed my legs. I grabbed a hold of a handful of bedcovers in both my fists as I spoke, "Aunt Maya was such a beautiful person, you know. It made me so furious to think that people didn't like her. I mean, how could you *not* like her? She was so kind and giving... she would have given anything to see the people she loved happy." I let out a breath and then turned around. I reached over to my bedside drawer and opened it up, pulling a photo album out of it.

When I sat back down, I placed the album on the bed, "wanna see pictures?"

"Sure," Atem said, a small smile on his face.

I opened up the album that was filled with my favourite photos of my aunt.

As I explained the context of nearly every photo to Atem, I was kind of surprised to see that he was paying complete attention.

But then again... maybe I shouldn't be surprised. Atem and I both know that we wouldn't be here if I didn't have that strange dream with my aunt on the night of my birthday. Maybe he really wanted to know the woman who... I guess... saved his life?

Or maybe I was just exaggerating.

"That necklace," Atem said, stopping me from turning the page, "you have the same one."

"Yeah, they're the same one... she had this necklace since she was a kid. Her father got it for her as a gift because she's always been interested in Ancient Egyptian history," I said, "she gave it to me right before she died."

"Oh," Atem said, "so the one you have is the exact one in the picture."

I nodded.

I then turned the page, revealing a photo of my aunt and I at a museum. "This is when we were at this fantastic museum in another city," I said, "I was mesmerized but all Aunt Maya could say was that these were nothing compared to seeing the real deal... it was before this photo that she promised to take me to Egypt for my eighteenth birthday."

"That was when I met you."

"Yeah," I sighed again, "I didn't get to go to Egypt with her, but instead she throws an Egyptian Pharaoh at me."

He smirked, "quite humorous."

I smiled at him and then pointed at another picture, "and I stole this one from Uncle Ethan," I chuckled as Atem looked at it.

It was a photo of a couple under an umbrella. Of course, it was Uncle Ethan and Aunt Maya.

They both had a friend who was a photographer and apparently the story was that they were all invited to a party downtown and the friend shot this photo while they were walking to the hall after parking their car.

I liked this photo a lot.

It was a photo of the two of them just being themselves... Aunt Maya giggling while Uncle Ethan kissed her cheek under an umbrella that protected them from the heavy rain.

They looked so young and happy and perfect.

"I always dreamed of finding a love like theirs," I said, "they were so happy. And it's not like they never fought... they fought like any couple would... but they forgave almost instantly." I started to smile, "Aunt Maya would always use that quote... it went something like: if a light bulb in your house went out, you fix the light bulb not change houses."

Atem chuckled, "there's a similar saying in Egypt," he said, "if an oar breaks while sailing through the Nile, you get a new oar, not abandon the entire ship."

I looked at him with a grin, "that's pretty hilarious." It was quite interesting to know that the Ancient Egyptians thought the way we did.

Atem smiled back, looking rather pleased.

And then I sighed again, for the hundredth time in the short little while that past. "Uncle Ethan is so strong... I don't know anyone stronger than him."

Atem looked back at my face as I closed the album, though there were still a bunch of photos we could look at.

"Can you imagine," I said, looking back at him, "loosing the love of your life? The girl you thought you would spend the rest of your life with? The woman you thought would one day be the mother of your children?"

Atem didn't respond, he just blinked and let out a breath.

I looked down at my fingers as I picked at my bed covers, "She had always been the one who understood him," I said, "I remember him saying that at his wedding reception... she was the one who got him. No one else could understand him like she did. And now she's gone."

"That's life... May," Atem said, "people come and go in our lives but we must learn to move on."

"I know," I said. Ro says the same thing. "I know."

He reached out and hesitated for a moment before he touched my hand.

"He's like my dad," I continued. "He's everything I wanted in a dad... when Aunty Maya was in the hospital high off of drugs because she was in so much pain... he held me and let me cry on his shoulder without shedding a tear. He was so strong."

Atem kept a firm hold of my hand, "fathers often are the strong ones. They stay strong for us."

"Exactly," I said, "that's exactly it... he stayed so strong for me... while she was in the hospital, when she died... even at her funeral... he was so strong. Then, on the day that he had to go clean out her office at the University, I volunteered to

go with him... I helped him clean up but then I had to go... so I left but then realized I left my phone."

I started to choke up, remembering this moment so clear in my mind.

"When I got back... I peeked through the window and I saw him on his knees," I sniffled and the waterworks began, "I never *ever* imagined... I should have known how much pain he was in... how much pain he's still in. He loves her so much."

Atem sighed, "oh dear Ra, you are so pathetic."

I wiped away my tears, getting ready to growl at him. I was totally not surprised that he resorted to being mean, but that didn't stop me from getting ready to talk back.

However, just as I opened my mouth, he reached out and pulled me into a hug.

A tight, warm and strangely comforting hug.

It wasn't one of his awkward back patting hugs... this was the real deal.

"Everyone feels pain when they lose someone they love," Atem said, "you should not feel upset because your uncle felt that pain. It's hard to understand why we lose people to death but is that not why we believe in gods and destiny and the afterlife?"

I swallowed back my tears as he pulled away and looked at me.

"There have been countless times where I questioned the gods and the destiny that they have set forth for me, as I am sure many people do... but nonetheless, it's important that we have hope. Hope is something that seems to be lacking in your society, May."

I looked at him, it was strange how our conversation went from an aching back to hope.

"My people... no matter the circumstance, would have hope till the end. They would hope for something as grand as a prosperous life, or something as small waking up to feel the sun on their skin the next morning. But even more

important is that they had hope in the fact that everything happened for a reason."

I let out a small laugh and looked at my hands.

"You've said that yourself, May. So why worry about such things? Everything happens for a reason. Your aunt has passed on... yes. You and your uncle must accept that. But instead of being gloomy, why not look at it differently."

"How can I look at my beautiful, wonderful, and loving aunts death differently?"

"For starters... you told me that I was sent here, to you, for a reason. You said that maybe I was sent here for a second chance," Atem said, making me look back at him, "but in all honesty, I never believed I deserved such a fate."

Now I was confused.

"I understand now that there's a whole different possibility," he continued, "my arrival here triggered a vision from your aunt. For you and your uncle, am I right?"

I nodded.

"Then maybe my being here... this entire curse... maybe all of this is a destiny woven by the gods to remind you, and maybe even your uncle, that your aunt isn't truly gone. She is here, watching over you. Still loving you. I believe you deserve that more than I deserve a second chance."

I let out another laugh and started smiling, "I guess it *is* possible." I mean, it could be.

He could be right. Though I didn't really agree with the fact that this wasn't at all a second chance for him. I think it *was* a second chance for him. But who says that it couldn't also be a wake up call for Uncle Ethan and I?

Now that he mentioned it... there was no way Uncle Ethan didn't consider this. He *must* have already figured out that Aunt Maya was there somewhere. I mean, he was *a lot* smarter than me.

And maybe that's why I've noticed him being a lot happier these days. It wasn't

the same Uncle Ethan... but it was better.

So I smiled at Atem, grateful for this little talk. "Thanks Atem. You're right."

"I'm always right."

I rolled my eyes but decided to let that go this time around.

"I wish I could have known her," he suddenly said, "she seems like a good person."

"She was wonderful," I smiled, "I wanna be just like her."

"I think you already are... a lot like her," he said, "at least... that's what I think from what you told me."

I kept smiling, flattered but also happy.

Then I leaned forward and kissed his lips.

Despite the fact that I was going around saying he was my '*boyfriend*,' it still took a lot of guts for me to do that.

But I did it, and he kissed me back.

Just like before, despite his harsh and cold demeanor, his lips were soft and his breath was warm against my skin.

When he pulled away, he had a small smile on his face. "It's only your second time kissing a man and you're already getting better."

Well technically, it was the third, since the first was all messed up. But whatever. That's fine.

I was suddenly in a good mood, so I decided to finally unleash confident and fun (and maybe hopefully sexy) May on this man who I was slowly, seriously falling for.

"Then why don't you let me practice so I can get better?"

My comment seemed to impress him, because his smile turned into a smirk and

he kissed me again.

Score!

Talk about confidence booster.

But as I kissed him, I finally realized why I was feeling so nervous. As much as I loved and missed her, it didn't have much to do with Aunty Maya at all. Nor was I scared of the wizard.

At least, not the wizard himself.

What scared me was that deep down, I had realized that if the wizard *was* back... there was a possibility that I wouldn't be able to have conversations like this with Atem anymore. That I wouldn't be able to kiss him anymore. Because that meant Atem would have to go back to Ancient Egypt.

The wizard being back brought forth the possibility that Atem would have to leave me.

And deep down my stomach turned because I knew that it was so selfish of me to pray that the wizard really was dead. That he was gone for good and he wasn't going to bring a sort of magic into this world that could potentially take Atem away from me.

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Bonus - [Atem and May Answer Your Questions]

Authors Note:

Okay so, let me just say ahead of time that I'm going to just have fun with this! [and you will clearly be able to tell] ;D I hope you enjoy!! <3

You can fit this part into the story wherever you please! There won't be any spoilers, obviously, but feel free to use your imagination as to how these two answered your questions!! =D

Please don't hesitate to post any more questions you may have in the comment section for me to answer in a future bonus chapter!! And also, let me know what you thought!! =D!

-Luckycharms!!!



What's your favourite Ice Cream flavour?

May: Chocolate. I like chocolate! ^.^ Chocolate ANYTHING is awesome.

Atem: I do *not* like ice cream. It is too sweet. But if I had to pick then I think I would pick strawberry. Though I must add that it tastes *nothing* like real strawberries.

May, what are your top three favourite movies?

May: Beauty and the Beast is in first place. The Lion King in second. And Rise of the Planet of the Apes is third.

Atem: *What?*

May: **shrugs** I love chimpanzee's.

Atem, describe your ideal woman. Mentally and Physically.

Atem: **thinks for a long time** That is quite an interesting question. I have never actually thought of what kind of woman was ideal for me. But now that I do think about it, mentally, I think I prefer women who are capable of being good mothers.

Luckycharms: hmm... please elaborate.

Atem: Well, a good mother is mature, loving, kind, strong, good natured-

May: Basically the opposite of you.

Atem: **ignores her** -hard working, dedicated... I'm sure you can figure out the rest.

Luckycharms: and physically?

Atem: Well, thats easy. She has to be clean, for starters. And I also think women with larger hips and breast are quite appealing.

May: Atem!

Atem: **looks at her** This is a question that was asked to me. Stay out of it. **looks back at Luckycharms** a larger waist and breasts are indicators of child bearing capacity, you know. But anyways, plump lips are always appealing. She should smell nice too. And she should have clean fingernails.

Luckycharms: **laughs** okay, that's a decent answer. **pretends to not notice May removing the crumbs from her lunch from her fingernails**

Atem, can you sing us a song?

Atem: No. I am Pharaoh. You sing me a song.

Luckycharms: ...

Atem, what's 9 + 10?

May: **giggles**

Atem: 19... is this a trick questions?

May: you stupid.

Atem: *What?*

Atem, when was your first kiss? Not including your mom or anything.

Atem: My first kiss was barely memorable. I don't even remember who the girl was but it was a long time ago. I may have lived for eleven or twelve years. There were too many girls since then, so I can't remember who the first was.

May: **rolls eyes** You are such a playboy.

Atem: I don't know what that means but I'm hardly a boy.

Atem, have you kissed many girls or even had sex? Pharaohs had Harems right?

Atem: Of course I've kissed many girls and had sex. You may have never seen me before but I'm actually extremely attractive. The women couldn't keep their eyes off of me.

May: Oh lord...

Atem: It's true. Unfortunately I was engaged to a woman for a year or so, so the fun and games stopped-

May: Wait what-

Atem: But, if you would let me *continue*, it didn't work out between the two of us so I called off the engagement and returned to being a single man. And no, we don't have harems. If you're married to multiple women, we prefer to simply call it a family.

May: You were *engaged* to someone and you *didn't* tell me?

Atem: Stop over exaggerating.

May: **get's up** Oh my gosh, Atem! I'm not talking to you until you explain this to me.

Atem: I have no reason to explain myself to *you*, woman.

May: **Bites lip and then mumbles to herself as she storms away.**

Luckycharms: Uh-oh.

Atem: Don't mind her. She'll be back.

Atem, do you find May pretty?

Luckycharms: Maybe it's a good thing May rushed off. You can answer this without any hesitation.

Atem: **looks over at May to make sure she's a safe distance away** No.

Luckycharms: Stop lying. I can practically read your mind.

Atem: **glares but blushes slightly** She's fine, I guess.

Luckycharms: Elaborate, buddy. Your fans want to know how you feel.

Atem: **likes the way that sounds** She has nice hair. I have never seen hair that is lovelier than hers. And I guess her hips are wide enough for my liking. Her chest is good. And she has a nice smile, though all she ever does is glare and yell at me.

Luckycharms: That's it?

Atem: And she smells nice. But don't tell her I said that.

Atem, what do you think of May's body? Is there anywhere else you'd like to kiss besides her lips?

Atem: **smirks** Well to answer the second part of your question: I'm a man. What do you expect? I'm quite the expert at love-making. If you could ask all the girls in Egypt who I've had relationships with, they'd agree.

Luckycharms: **puts hand over face**

Atem: Unfortunately, May seems to have this strong sense of purity and decency. Obviously, she is a virgin and even if I wanted to, I doubt she's going to let me kiss her *anywhere* aside from her lips. She is strange. I don't understand *how* she could possibly resist *me*.

Luckycharms: Mhmm.

Atem: As for the first part of the question, I already answered that but if I *must* repeat myself, she has a nice body. Though I don't think it would kill her to go work out a little bit. It's good to be healthy, am I right? May is the most unfit woman I have ever met.

May: **finally returning** Shut up, Atem. I'm not that unhealthy. Why are you two talking about my health?

Atem: *Next* question please.

Atem, can you imagine yourself having kids with May?

Atem: **blushes**

May: **blushes**

Luckycharms: You gotta answer the question, Akhenatem.

Atem: Well... I do want to have children eventually. How else will I pass on my

name and how else would I have an heir?

Luckycharms: I think the person who was asking this question was trying to understand if you wanna have kids with *May*.

Atem: **sighs** I don't know. Why not?

May: I think it's a little early on to be asking such questions.

Finally, a question for Luckycharms: It there a guy in particular that you picture Atem looking like?

Luckycharms: Ohmygod, this is such a tough question. I usually try not to put exact pictures on characters anymore simply cause I like you all to imagine for yourself... so don't be freaked out by what I think he looks like (haha!)

Atem: What are you talking about?

Luckycharms: There's a lot of debate over how Ancient Egyptians looked like, which is another reason why I never specified how Atem looked *exactly* but what is fairly certain was that Ancient Egyptians would have had to be dark skinned (considering where they lived and just in terms of the biology of our skin... it just makes sense for them to have been darker skinned.

Atem: My skin *is* darker.

Luckycharms: Exactly. Which is why I imagine his skin to be darker. I also imagine him to have soft hair (now that it's grown out) And in terms of his facial and body features (chiseled-ness, shape, structure, etc...) I totally imagine him to be the "Maximum Fitness" cover version of Shemar Moore. Atem is built, strong and tall, which obviously comes from the athletic side of him and I feel like Shemar Moore's body is a good reflection of a body like Atem's. (I have attached a picture to please your eyes since Shemar Moore is just so beautiful - I mean, look at those shoulders. Absolutely stunning.)

Atem: I don't know who you're talking about, but I do agree that my shoulders

are stunning.

Luckycharms: Anyways, I mostly like the picture of Shemar Moore because he's got the small eye and low brows which I totally imagined an 'evil' Atem to have. Like, the stare that Shemar Moore has in that picture is the classic "don't mess with me" stare that Atem would have had.

Atem: Are you going to show me what you're talking about?

Luckycharms: **ignores him** Hope that answers your question! And don't let my perspective ruin yours! I keep my character descriptions fairly vague on purpose! So feel free to imagine Atem however you lovely hearts want to imagine him.

Atem: *What?*

Luckycharms: THANKS FOR ALL THE QUESTIONS!!!! I hope you enjoyed the answers for them =D Feel free to post any more questions in the comment section below and I will continue to answer them in a later bonus chapter!!! Also, don't forget to let me know what you thought about the answers!!

Chapter 25 - [Beauty and the Customary Cultural Practice]

Despite my inherent fear of a returning wizard, things were going great. I found myself escaping from my room in the middle of the night for the next couple days to see if I would spot something strange... but there was nothing.

Maybe I was just seeing things the entire time.

So after five days of double and triple checking my living room at midnight, I dropped it.

I dropped it and moved on.

There was no wizard.

He was dead.

Atem was right. Only the gods could bring people back to life, and if they weren't willing to bring Aunty Maya back to life then they sure as hell wouldn't need to bring a douchebag of a wizard back to life.

Am I right?

Anyways, since after our first kiss I had basically gotten permission to kiss him whenever I wanted, that was exactly what I started doing.

I liked kissing him.

And after having a long conversation with Ro on the phone, I realized that this was normal.

I've mentioned before that I had never dated a guy before, let alone kissed one...

so I didn't really understand what was normal and what wasn't.

As little girls, we always think that movies and books and those sorts of stuff would help us understand but that was never really the case. You never really get it until it happens for real.

I mean, for starters, Atem and I weren't technically dating yet. Neither of us had formally said: "let's be a couple."

In my mind, prior to ever meeting Atem, I imagined that getting a boyfriend would involve a lengthy process of getting to know one another, going on multiple dates, flirting and texting and lots and lots of attraction and then finally, him asking me to be his girlfriend.

With Atem... that wasn't the case at all. I mean, yeah, I liked him. But we fought a lot. We never went on any real dates. There was no flirting, nor any outward display of attraction. And definitely no him asking me to be his girlfriend.

But in the equation of our potential romance I did have to factor in the fact that he was an Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh.

I guess, to be fair, this fact threw all the conventions of romance out the window from the very beginning.

Gosh, was this complicated.

But long story short, I liked kissing him.

And I liked *him*.

He may have been a douchebag here and there but at other times, he was incredibly sweet.

Like today.

I was studying for yet another test when Atem walked into my room. He sat down on my bed and just stared at me while I stared back.

"What?" I finally said when he didn't speak up.

"Are you busy?" he asked. His eyes looked a little tired, like he hadn't been getting any proper sleep. But they also looked like he was on some sort of mission. Goal oriented.

"Well... not really."

"Good, well then get ready. We have to go."

My eyebrows rose, "go? Go where?"

"Aurora told me that it is customary in your culture to take the person you are dating out on dates," he said. "She recommended going out for dinner."

I rolled my eyes, *oh Ro*.

But I had to admit, I liked the idea of that and I *was* hungry.

"She also said that I'm supposed to be polite and pay for you."

"True," I smiled, "but you sure you're okay with that?"

He shrugged, "if I'm going to do something, I might as well do it properly."

I liked that way of thinking.

We didn't go anywhere special, mostly because the both of us weren't really in the mood to walk really far off but also because Atem was in fact going to pay and I didn't want him to have to pay too much.

So we picked my favourite Japanese place and had a grand meal filled with sushi, rice, miso soup and a bunch of other fantastic things.

When we were done, Atem paid as planned and we left the restaurant.

It was only fifteen minutes away from my apartment, but we were walking rather slowly since the night was relatively warmer than usual, and neither of us seemed to mind.

"Your customs are strange."

"I was waiting for you to say that," I chuckled.

"It's quite different in Egypt."

"I can imagine," I said, "but really... what was it like in Egypt?"

"Are you asking for the equivalent of 'dating?'"

I nodded.

"There is none," he said. "If you like someone, you spend time with them, make your feelings clear, and if they like you back then perfect. You are a couple."

I laughed, "I think that's an oversimplification."

"Of course it is. But it's not as complex of a situation as it is here," he continued. "There are much too many rules here. The man has to pay. The man has to hold the door open. No sex on the first date. The man has to buy the woman flowers. The woman has to laugh. The man—"

"Okay, okay," I kept laughing, "I get it."

"In Egypt, there were no rules. You be yourself and do what you like. That's how you fall in love with someone," he said. "How can you really love someone if they are just following a set of rules? That's not being yourself."

There he goes again, continuing to make me wonder why on earth he was cursed for being evil. "That's a good point," I said, meaning it. "Maybe that's why the divorce rates here are so high."

"And do you want to know what baffles me the most?" he continued. And though he was asking me a question, he didn't wait for my answer, "this concept of virginity equaling purity. "

Okay.

I was *kind of* guilty of this.

Ro was a sort of feminist and she would have agreed with Atem.

"Why is it that that's the case in this society?" he asked me.

I had no answer, so I shrugged.

"I mean it's understandable to avoid pregnancy prior to marriage for the obvious reason of providing a child with a comfortable household, but to forbid sex altogether? Absolutely ridiculous."

I chuckled, "well, to be fair... that idea is kind of changing."

He crossed his arms. "I think it's ridiculous that it was there to begin with."

"You sound like you feel strongly about this."

"I do," Atem said, firmly. "Myself and my people believe sex to be a *beautiful* thing. It not only brings true pleasure to those involved but it is also the mechanism that is necessary for childbirth. For *life*."

I let out a breath.

"To call it a *sin*..." he scoffed. "It truly baffles me."

"Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion."

"So you believe this too?" He sounded shocked and looked at me with disapproval.

I shrugged, putting my hands behind my back. "I don't think having sex is a sin. Ro and Alec enjoy premarital sex all the time, and I don't judge." I felt my cheeks warm up, kind of surprised that I was talking to him about my feelings of sex. "I'm just not particularly sure what it means to me. I don't think it's wrong to have sex before marriage. I just don't feel comfortable with the idea of letting myself have that kind of interaction until I am entirely comfortable with the man I'm with... and I just imagine that to be once I'm married."

"Well..." Atem started. "I guess that's fair."

"And if you want me to be completely honest... I prefer to only ever have sex with *one* guy. Not because messing around is bad or anything like that... but because I do agree that it's a pretty *beautiful* thing. A beautiful and intimate and personal thing. I'd rather share such an experience with *the one*. You know?"

"The one," Atem let out a small laugh. "An interesting concept, if you ask me."

"Well, I'm not surprised," I responded. "You're a Pharaoh who was probably intending on marrying a bunch of women if you weren't cursed and sent here."

He looked at me with an expression that seemed to show that he had taken offense to what I had just said. So I nudged him, "kidding."

"You misinterpret my culture," he said. "As do many of your so called scholars who study my people."

I listened.

"It is true that it's not uncommon for a Pharaoh to marry many times and have multiple wives. But that does not mean that he was simply collecting wives for the sake of collecting wives," Atem said. "My father is an example. He married my mother, his primary wife, because he loved her. The other two were political. Pharaoh's have multiple wives for political reasons. Not because they disregard or disrespect women."

"Okay," I said, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you."

"Our society is a largely monogamous society aside from the case with royalty. That being said," Atem continued, "I will not deny that there has been a couple Pharaoh's here and there who used such a right to their advantage. Just as you have your cheating and uncivilized men in your society, we have ours. Ramesses the Second being one of them."

I laughed, knowing full well that he added that last part because he knew Ramesses the Great was my favourite Pharaoh. "Tsk, tsk," I shook my head. "Insulting your godly, royal ancestors, now I see why you were cursed for being evil."

He smirked. "He was a good king. And a good father, so I heard," Atem clarified. "A husband, not so much."

I smiled and then reached for his hand, "well, if it'll make you feel better, Ramesses II *used* to be my favourite Pharaoh. But after getting to know you, it changed."

He seemed pleased.

"Now my favourite Pharaoh is Ahmenmose III," Atem's father. "He seemed cool."

Atem rolled his eyes and pulled his hand away from mine.

But then I laughed and grabbed it again, "kidding, kidding!" I laughed, a little happy to see that my preference meant something to him. "It's *you*, really!"

He let me hold his hand once I admitted it.

"You're the coolest," I added. "How many other Pharaohs vanished mysteriously and got to travel to the future?"

Atem simply smirked at that, but didn't say anything.

"I mean, on top of that, I don't actually *know* any of the other Pharaoh's. They might have been assholes for all I know."

"Well, if you find the *assholes* to be least likable... I'm sure you would have loved all of my ancestors. After all, I might as well have been the biggest asshole of them all."

I laughed.

Well, at least he was being honest.

When we got home after our little 'date,' I really sat down and thought about what he said.

Despite being pretty judgmental of our society... he was kind of right?

What *is* up with all these 'rules?'

Why was it so hard for people to just be polite?

He was right. Why couldn't we just be ourselves and find love that way? It shouldn't be weird for the girl to pay. It shouldn't be necessary for the guy to be always buying gifts. Or for the girl to cook all the time. Or for the guy to be the one who brings home the money.

I guess I couldn't argue against the fact that our society was changing. I mean, it

was. We were getting better at this in some ways... but not in all.

And in terms of Atem and I... I guess I really didn't have to worry about these label. I didn't need to stop myself from opening up completely simply because I couldn't yet put a label on our relationship.

I would be myself.

I would do what I wanted and if it worked out, then it worked out.

Like now.

I left my bedroom and walked into the kitchen where Atem was crouched down on the floor while filling Neferkiti's cat bowl with food so she could eat. "Hey," I called.

He looked up at me, revealing his rather tired eyes. "What?"

"You're right."

He looked confused. "About?" he asked as he stood back up.

"Let's do this the Egyptian way."

"What?"

Neferkiti purred for some reason, rubbed herself against my legs, then Atem's legs and then went for the food. I kind of felt like she was cheering me on.

Proud of me for being a woman.

"You said that back at home, if you like someone, you spend time with them and make your feelings clear and if the other person feels the same way then that's it. I'll keep it simple. No more need to be complex."

"Okay," he tossed the cat food tin into the garbage and then looked back at me. "So?"

"I like you," I said with a smile, "a lot. And from now on, I'm just gonna be honest with you and give it to you straight, okay?"

He stared at me for a moment, not really getting it. But then I wrapped my arms around his necks, got on my toes and kissed his lips.

He kissed me back, hugging me tighter than usual.

It was getting a lot easier. Kissing him, I mean. I wasn't so embarrassed to do it anymore and that made it all even better.

When I pulled my lips away, he surprised me by resting his forehead against mine, his eyes still closed. This was the first time he'd ever done this so I was a little confused, but seeing him so close to me... looking so calm and relaxed was nice. Really, *really* nice.

A smile then formed on his face, "I like you too."



Chapter 26 - [Beauty and the Disastrous Dinner]

This was the fourth time this week that Atem woke up looking absolutely horrid.

He was almost *always* awake before me. Actually... always, until very recently. And now, despite getting *more* sleep, he looked like he was dying.

He walked out of his room, hair a mess and shoulders slouched forward. Of course, he also looked angry. I was just coming out of the washroom when I saw him and he didn't bother to greet me.

"Good morning?"

He ignored me and walked into the washroom, shutting the door behind him.

I was making the two of us breakfast when he got out of the washroom and I watched him carefully as he joined me in my small kitchen.

The thing about Atem was that he was always so radiant. I don't know what it was but he was always glowing from the inside out, despite his rather dark and negative personality. He also always walked around with perfect posture, shoulders back and head held high, adding to this strange magnificent persona he seemed to portray.

And his skin... god was I envious of his skin. It was practically flawless. Like a perfectly sculpted sculpture. No acne, no pores, no dark circles... no nothing. He was so lucky and didn't even realize it.

Even his eyebrows were perfect, god-damn-it. And here I was having to painfully pluck mine every other day.

But for the past couple days... he was just going downhill.

His hair was a mess, he had bags under his eyes and he looked angrier than usual. He walked around all slouched and tired looking and there was clearly something wrong.

And—

Oh dear lord.

My eyes widened as I took a sip of my coffee and watched him pour some into his own cup.

He had a pimple.

A pimple.

Right on his forehead.

"What's wrong, Atem." I asked, eyes glued onto that pimple on his head. I've known him for a year now. We've lived together for a year now. And this was the first time I saw a pimple on his face.

Of course, it didn't make me think he was any less handsome.

But I had to admit, the lack of perfection suddenly made him look a lot more... human.

Maybe in a way... it made me like him even more?

"Nothing," Atem said as he grabbed his cereal that I sweetened with extra honey, sat on the chair at the island and started munching away.

I sat down too, "doesn't look like it."

"Silence, woman," he said, rather harshly. "I have a headache."

My eyebrows rose.

A headache?

Wow, it hadn't even been a month yet since we started dating and he was already losing it.

I opened up a drawer, pulled out some Advil and handed him two tablets, "here."

He glanced over at the tablets, "what is that?"

"Medication, it'll help with the headache. Just swallow them with some water to help you wash it down."

He let out a breath and then took the Advil.

"You've been looking all weird for a while now," I said as I reached out and placed my hand on his forehead.

He surprisingly let me touch him without flinching.

And it didn't seem like he had a fever or anything.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes," he simply said. "I just didn't sleep well."

"Well, maybe you should just go straight back to bed and try sleeping? I'm sure Grandma Seetha wouldn't mind if you didn't come in for a day."

Atem swallowed his cereal before he spoke, "fine."

After eating my own cereal, I got dressed and left for school. It was still pretty cold and icy outside, despite it being the end of March, so I couldn't ride that new bike of mine just yet. It was still sitting there in Atem's room, waiting to be ridden.

But for now, I left pretty early since I didn't want to be rushing to class.

On my way to class, however, my phone started to ring. When I pulled out it out, I saw that it was my mother and almost instantly rolled my eyes. I wasn't going to answer, but after it rang a couple times I decided to pick up the call.

I mean, my mom may have been fairly negligent but she wasn't as much of a douche as my dad.

"Hello?"

"Mayaleena?"

"Yeah."

"I'm glad I was able to get a hold of you. Are you available tonight?"

"Why?"

"If you aren't free, I need you to cancel your plans—"

"*Why?*"

"It was your grandfather's birthday a couple days ago, May," my mother said, referring to her own father. And uncle Ethan's father, I must add. "He's having a family dinner tonight."

Oh great. Way to ruin a Friday night.

"I don't want to come," I simply said, allowing myself to sound like a selfish brat.

"That's not an option, May. Even your brother's going to be there. He's gonna be arriving around noon."

"Why are you telling me this now?" She asked, "couldn't you have given me some warning ahead of time?"

"I can't argue with you right now, May. I'm at work."

"I'm not coming, Mom."

"Yes you are. The last thing your father needs—"

"Dad's exactly the reason why I'm not coming."

"May..." there was a pause, "don't you want to introduce that boyfriend of yours to the family?"

I hesitated, "what?"

"Grandma Seetha told me you're dating a nice boy—"

"What?" Since when did she and Grandma Seetha talk?

"Why don't you bring him along?"

There was no way in hell I was bringing Atem to meet my family. Not that I was embarrassed of him or anything... but if my family, including my grandparents, couldn't stand me, then they definitely wouldn't be able to stand Atem. "I'm not coming."

"Uncle Ethan is going to be there."

Now I sighed.

I couldn't let Uncle Ethan walk into the lion's den alone. That was for sure. He and I were a lot alike and he would have no one on his side if I weren't there. I mean, I guess he had my brother but my brother was more of the middleman. So he didn't count.

"I'm sure your uncle Ethan would want you to be there."

I'm sure he would too.

"Fine," I said, "but I won't stay for long. I have tests to study for." This wasn't a lie.

"Good," she said, sounding strangely relieved. "Your grandfather will be happy to see you."

Yeah right, I thought. He's just as bad as dad.

"And I'm serious, May," my mother continued, "bring that boy along. Your grandmother told me he was a wonderful young man."

I snorted.

But for the rest of that day, I wondered if it wouldn't be such a bad idea to bring him with me. For one, that would be another person on Uncle Ethan's side. And...

I could rub it in the faces of my horrid cousin.

She always thought that I'd be a single cat lady for the rest of my life since I was usually fairly quiet and never dated in my entire life.

And well... I didn't like her very much.

It would be nice to bring a guy like Atem and show him off. And to make it even better, Atem wasn't just good looking, he was also smart. I'm sure he'd be able to hold a conversation with my grandfather who was also a judge.

But of course, it was still very risky. Atem *could* say something ridiculous and make a total fool out of himself. Which would totally suck.

In the end, I decided I would ask him if he wanted to come. If he did, then great. If not then that was great too.

When I got home, Atem was in the kitchen, gulping down a glass of water.

He looked at me with the same eyes that looked at me this morning. Tired, and totally out of it.

Maybe he should just stay home after all.

"What's wrong?" Atem asked me.

"Nothing," I said, "I have to go out tonight though."

"Where?"

"It's my grandfather's birthday and my mom wants me to be there."

Atem watched my face carefully, obviously trying to read how I felt about the entire thing. "Oh."

"She asked me to bring you too but—"

"I want to come."

I looked at him, surprised, "you do?"

He nodded, "I'd like to meet your family."

I felt my cheeks warm up, "really?"

He shrugged, "and I'm bored."

"Are you sure you aren't too tired?"

"I'm fine," he said. "Besides, you'll probably need the support. You seem totally incapable of handling your father alone."

That made me laugh.

We got ready pretty fast. I was wearing a simple floral dress with my hair in a half ponytail while Atem wore jeans and a nice, sort of fancy shirt.

The dinner was to start at six, but since my grandfather's place was about an hours drive away, we left at four-thirty. Uncle Ethan offered to give us a ride but I decided that we would go on our own. I was going to be driving my brothers car, which meant I could piss off my dad. Which was, of course, exactly what I wanted to do.

Atem always liked being driven around. He was kind of like a puppy when we got into cars and drove to places that he's never seen before. He'd stare out the window, eyes wide, trying to take in everything. Of course, we didn't do it that often so I never really saw this puppy nature of his much.

Today, however, his eyes were filled with more curiosity than usual.

My grandfather didn't live in downtown like most of us. He lived much closer to the countryside in this part of the city that was pretty much reserved for rich people. He had a lot of land and a big house and pretty much everything he ever needed or wanted.

Despite how much *I* struggle with money, my family was fairly rich. My parents, though not as rich as my grandfather, had a lovely house in the suburbs, which was where I lived prior to moving into the apartment.

I could never complain about life as a child. I was well off. The only thing that was wrong was the fact that my parents parenting sucked.

Anyways, Atem had never seen the suburbs before. He had gotten so used to the

tall buildings and lack of green in downtown that when we drove through the suburbs to get onto the northbound highway, he was mesmerized.

"I thought all of your land looked like where you live."

I shook my head, "no, that's downtown." I said, "this is the city of Broadview."

"I like this place much better."

I nodded.

I did too.

I mean, the old, Victorian university buildings of Oakville which were surrounded by skyscrapers and other modern architecture were nice and all... but I did always like green. "When I have enough money to get my own house, I'd want to move here," I said. I want a front lawn, a garden, a backyard and all that stuff.

In another twenty minutes or so, we finally made it to my grandfather's hometown.

Within minutes, I was pulling into my grandfather's massive driveway and it was totally hard to ignore Atem's gaping mouth. "*That's* where your grandfather lives?"

"Yeah, huge right?"

Atem looked shocked, "and you live in that puny apartment?"

"I know, crazy."

I parked the car near the door after noticing my dad's car already parked there. Uncle Ethan's car was there too. As were my grandfather's three or four cars.

I groaned to myself. *God* did I hate this place.

We got out together and Atem marveled at the massive house while I was practically holding his hand simply to make sure he didn't fall.

When we got to the door, my mother was the one who answered the door when I

rang the loud doorbell.

At first, she had her usual angry expression on her face. But when she saw it was me, her expression softened slightly. She even smiled a little. "May," she said. "I'm glad you came."

"Hey mom."

She then surprised me with a hug.

When she pulled away, she glanced over at Atem. "You must be..."

"Atem," I said. "Atem, meet my mom. Mom, meet Atem."

My mom held out her hand, "nice to meet you, Atem."

She surprisingly pronounced it the way you were supposed to pronounce it. As 'Aah-tem,' despite me introducing him as A-tem.

Atem looked a little surprised too, but he took her hand and shook it.

"Come in," my mom stepped aside, letting us walk in.

We walked in and took our shoes off at the door. And Atem didn't waste a single second before he marveled at the inside of the house. I, however, didn't like this house.

Yes, it was beautiful and yes it was massive... but it belonged to my mother's stuck up father who was definitely going to make me feel like crap before the end of this.

Even uncle Ethan didn't like him. And that was weird for two reasons. Firstly, this guy was uncle Ethan's *dad*.

Secondly, Uncle Ethan was extremely easygoing. So it was hard to get him to not like you.

Both Atem and I followed my mother into the living room where we were greeted by Uncle Ethan and my dad. Of course, my dad looked at me with disappointment and disregard.

But I ignored him. To be honest, I didn't really care about my dad's nonsense. "Hey, Uncle Ethan," I said as I sat next to him.

"Hey," he looked over at Atem, "I'm surprised to see you here."

"I was invited," was Atem's answer.

"Really?" Uncle Ethan asked.

I nodded, "mom told me to bring him."

I saw my dad look over at my mom, who didn't look back. "Let me call your grandfather," my mother said before she walked off.

I let out a breath, "Ugh."

Uncle Ethan chuckled.

While we waited for my grandfather, Atem and I sat quietly and listened to my uncle and father converse.

My dad was another person who uncle Ethan didn't like. And of course, my dad felt the same way about him.

From what I could remember, the two of them disliked each other all my life but it wasn't exactly that obvious.

Both of them were very well educated, and you could hear it in their subliminal disses towards one another while they talked about sophisticated things like politics. Any normal person would have never assumed they weren't getting along.

Unless you were good at reading faces.

Which Atem seemed to be good at, "they hate each other. Don't they?" He asked me in a whisper.

I nodded.

And right then, my brother walked in. "May," he smiled widely.

I smiled back and got up to give him a tight hug. And just when I pulled away, I noticed that his girlfriend was with him.

I grinned at her and rushed into a hug. Unlike my brother, his girlfriend Renna was still in the city. She stayed back to continue her education and do her Masters in Physiology in a different university. Unfortunately, because her field was super difficult, we barely got a chance to see each other. But that may have been one of the reasons that the long distance relationship between my brother and her worked out. Both of them were super busy, so neither of them could blame each other.

But despite that, my brother and her loved each other very much and have been together for almost six years now.

Reena was gorgeous, in my opinion. She had short, brown hair and fair skin and dark, dark eyes. My father had called her plain once before, but I didn't think so. Yeah, she wasn't extravagant. She didn't do anything special with her hair or wear expensive clothes or even wear much makeup... but she was still lovely.

And she was super nice.

And she seemed to also be super curious about Atem.

I had already told my brother about Atem and I a while ago. I didn't want him to find out from Blake first. So after that night on Atem's birthday, I called my brother and told him.

Of course, my brother wasn't too excited to see him here. But he still smiled at Atem and greeted him appropriately while his friendly girlfriend sat next to him and got to know him.

Though I must admit that my brother didn't seem to dislike Atem as much as before.

But just as my brother sat down, my grandfather walked in, head held high, eyes looking straight at all of us.

My grandfather looked exactly like my uncle, tall and handsome. But old. His skin was wrinkled and all his hair was white. And he had these creepy gray eyes which, despite being creepy now, I could imagine were once beautiful.

And though he looked like my uncle, he acted a lot like my dad. And this was exactly why those two got along so well.

My grandfather didn't greet me. Instead he waited for me to say hello first. My grandfather had this idea that he was the king of our family... which wasn't helped by the fact that everyone treated him that way.

"Hey grandpa."

My grandfather nodded. "It's been a while, Mayaleena," he said. "Have you become so busy with school that you couldn't make the effort to come see your grandfather?"

That wasn't meant to be nice, and I was sure everyone in the room knew that.

So I didn't respond and just chuckled awkwardly.

His eyes then moved to Atem, "and this young man is who?"

"This is Atem. My boyfriend."

Atem nodded his head, obviously not knowing how to respond to such a man. I couldn't blame him though. He was *my* grandfather and I often didn't know what to say to him either.

"Boyfriend. I see," my grandfather said, "and what—"

The doorbell rang. Just on time to save me from whatever embarrassing question he was going to ask me.

But I knew who it was and I felt my body stiffen.

My mother was the one who left to open the door, and when she did I could hear the cocky voice of my cousin Kitana.

Her father was the older brother of my mom and my Uncle Ethan, and Kitana was my age. She had two other sisters, both of whom were married and brought along their husbands. And she also had an older brother who was close to my older brother since he was only a year older than him.

But Kitana.

Ugh. I did *not* like her.

She was a big bully all my life and was practically perfect.

Perfect black hair, perfect tanned skin, perfect white teeth, perfect high grades, perfect everything.

And she was the apple of my grandfather's eye.

She walked in without taking off her heels so you could hear the clacking against the floor as she rushed into the living room. "Grandpa!" She hugged my grandfather and kissed his cheek.

My grandfather didn't smile. But you could see that he adored this girl from the tolerance in his eyes. "My dear," my grandpa said. "Hello."

Kitana was a spoiled brat. And you could see it in her glorious attire. My simple floral dress was nothing compared to what she was wearing.

But despite my obvious dislike for this girl, I couldn't deny that she was beautiful. Her black hair was long and flowing and as always it was done perfectly, as if she got a stylist to do it for her (I wouldn't be surprised if she did though). She was skinny and tall and had perfect curves.

The only flaw in her was her cockiness and her unbelievable bitchiness.

After greeting the entire family with kisses and hugs, including me, her eyes fell on Atem, "and who's this?"

"Mayaleena's boyfriend." My grandfather said for me.

Kitana looked shocked. She looked at me and then at Atem. Then she smiled a flirty smile and held out her hand, "nice to meet you!"

I rolled my eyes.

It was gonna be a long night.

Dinner was as stressful as I imagined it to be. I was sitting in between Uncle Ethan and Atem and for most of the night Kitana was busy flirting with Atem while my uncle Ethan was continuing that subliminal diss off with his brother, my dad, and my grandpa. My brother was involved in a group conversation with Kitana's brother, her older sisters and their husbands, who weren't so bad. My mom was talking to Kitana's mom (who was as bad as her) and I was pretty much alone, trying to entertain myself.

But things got a little messy when my grandfather decided to put me under the spotlight. "So, Mayaleena. How are your studies going?"

"Good," I simply said.

"Do you have any idea what you're planning to do when you graduate?"

Gosh! I just started first year! Why do people always ask that question? "Not really sure yet," I said.

I could see my dad shaking his head.

"At the moment I'm thinking teaching—"

My grandfather let out a small laugh. "Following closely behind your uncles footsteps, hmm."

"Uncle Ethan's a researcher *and* a professor," I corrected before uncle Ethan could. My uncle worked really hard to get his title as a professor and I always felt the need to make sure people got it right. "I was thinking maybe a high school teacher."

My grandfathers eyebrows rose slowly. "What on earth would make you want to do that?" he asked with brutal honesty.

I opened my mouth to answer but Atem spoke up first, "she's a good teacher."

Everyone looked at him, including me.

My grandfather blinked, obviously deciding to push aside any conversation related to me. "I forgot to ask you, young man. What exactly are *you* doing? Studying? Working?"

I had a feeling a conversation like this would arise. So I told Atem to say that he was studying in university, just to prevent any nonsense from my grandfather.

But Uncle Ethan surprised the two of us. "He's my PhD student."

Despite being shocked by his decision to say that, I swallowed back a chuckle.

Atem? A PhD student? That's pretty hilarious.

"He's remarkable at reading hieroglyphs. A brilliant student," my uncle added.

My grandfather seemed humored by this. He always thought that anything related to Ancient Egyptian History was pathetic. "Hmm," he took a sip of his wine, "and what exactly are you doing your PhD on?"

I hesitated. There was no way Atem would be able to answer that. I was sure that he didn't even know what a PhD was. So I turned to Uncle Ethan.

But Atem spoke first. "On Akhenatem," he said, firmly. "on the factors in his life that may have led to his disappearance, which led to the subsequent fall of Egypt."

Uncle Ethan choked on his food and had to cough a couple times to clear his throat.

I looked at him, wondering what was wrong. I was entirely pleased that Atem was able to legitimately answer this question. But then my grandfather let out a laugh. "It's no wonder you took him on as your student, Ethan."

Uncle Ethan wiped his mouth with a cloth but didn't respond.

"Did you know Maya?" My grandfather asked Atem.

Maya?

And then I realized what had happened.

The factors in Akhenatem's life that may have led to his disappearance and the subsequent fall of Egypt?

What Atem had said was what Auntie Maya was working on before she died.

Clearly he had been using that library card of his. And clearly he was specifically looking into Aunt Maya.

"Yes," Atem lied. "She was a great woman."

Everyone went silent. No one in my family really liked talking about Aunt Maya. Simply because they didn't exactly like her. In their opinion, she was the reason why Uncle Ethan went haywire and totally did a U-turn from the families ways. And then, in a way, she embarrassed them all by dying.

"Speaking of Maya," my grandfather started, "Ethan, have you considered starting again—"

"I'm not going through this with you again, father." Uncle Ethan said, firmly.

"You have no kids and you're aging. Do you really expect to spend the rest of your life alone?"

Uncle Ethan opened his mouth to argue but my mother spoke first, "leave him be, father. He's busier with work than you'd expect. He'll do whatever he wants whenever he's ready."

Everyone was surprised by this. Especially my grandfather, myself, my dad and Uncle Ethan.

But Uncle Ethan and my mother exchanged a weird glance before getting back to eating.

After that awkwardness, my grandfather decided to turn his attention back to Atem. "So, what *do* you think about the fall of Egypt. I know Maya had this ridiculous conception that with one tiny piece of evidence she could formulate an entire PhD. I hope you aren't the same."

I started to glare... at my meat, of course. *Jerk.*

"Well, there is a lot of evidence that proves her argument was correct," Atem said. "Political turmoil in Akhenaten's youth was indeed correct. And no other scholar was able to deduce that. Maya's attention to details was stunning."

Uncle Ethan looked at Atem. There was a strange expression on his face... like

he was relieved. But why? Maybe it was because Aunty Maya was right?

"How are you so certain?"

"I'm certain because I know more about Akhenatem than anyone," he paused, "I have the best... resources."

Thankfully, my grandfather didn't seem interested enough to continue questioning him on his 'resources.' "So you believe that political turmoil in this Pharaoh's childhood led to his strict policies which in turn led to him being overthrown?"

Atem hesitated, "well, he wasn't exactly overthrown. He was removed from power. But yes."

"Well," my grandfather smirked, "if that's the case then maybe Egypt deserved to fall. And that Pharaoh deserved to be *removed* from power."

Atem raised his eyebrow, "and why do you believe that?"

I rolled my eyes, certain that my grandfather was just trying to pick a fight.

"Because a leader who will let his childhood *emotions* hinder his reign over a nation is no leader at all. A leader must be firm and think solely of the future and what they need to do in that moment to make certain of a good future. Not dwell over the past and make silly decisions."

Atem let out a small laugh. He was offended.

I opened my mouth to try and stop the conversation but my grandfather continued. "And the society in general was one that was bound for failure. Any society that focuses so much on things as silly as *religion* and *culture* are digging their own grave. Why do you think our nation was able to excel so much? In technology, in politics, in business, in everything? It's because we've stepped away from the restricting hold of religion and culture," My grandfather then proceeded to shake his head and laugh as he cut his meat, "That's why I think it's such a waste of time to study such people. You should study *our* nation and *our* people. Not some *silly* Ancient Civilization who couldn't distinguish between the functions of the brain and the functions of a heart."

"You are a pitiful old man," Atem suddenly said.

Silence filled the room as my grandfather looked up at Atem in shock.

"You are the epitome of ignorance," Atem continued, "you must have had a sad life."

"Excuse me?"

"Atem," I reached out and squeezed his leg, trying to stop him.

"You say that your people are superior... are better? But I have never seen anyone as pathetic as the people of your nation. You have your food grown and packaged for you by other people, your water comes from some source and is delivered right to your home, people clean for you, people build for you, people hunt for you, people do almost everything for you. And all your people do is sit back and relax all day and complain about your foolish, little problems," Atem said. "I dare you to go out and do all of those things alone. Hunt and grow food, create your own homes, fetch your own water. You wouldn't last a day. My people, however, *lived* like this on a day-to-day basis."

Everyone was lost for words.

"You are fine to say what you want about the leader. He *was* a failure. He failed to protect his people as a leader should. But do not insult the people when you are completely ignorant of their lives and lifestyle."

I looked at Atem, wondering if that's how he felt about himself all along. He thought he was a failure?

"All your people seem to care about is money. You educate yourself from a very young age, not with the intention of learning but with the intention to one day find a job that will sustain your lifestyle. Such a perspective has resulted in doctors who care not about their patients aside from the money they bring to their offices. You have politicians who care not of creating a comfortable life for the people they rule, but instead of the money that they steal from these people. You have lawyers who care not about bringing justice to those who deserve it, but do care of the money that they can earn. Your people are *selfish*. More selfish than any I have encountered in my entire life. In Egypt, there were the exceptions but most doctors treated to save lives, politicians worked to bring

happiness to people, and lawyers lived to bring justice to our country. But of course. What would I know? I am but a young Egyptian boy."

I was nervous.

I was hella nervous.

Was he going to slip and say something that they would think was crazy?

But Atem was exactly right. And I didn't want to stop him from giving my grandfather a good talking too.

"But alright, let's look past the complex topics such as politics and law and medicine. Instead, let us look at something simpler. Something as simple as family. You say you have a superior nation? Superior people? Well fine, the basic unit of a society is a family, but look at your *family*." He gestured at all of us, "I thought *my* family was bad but I have never seen a family so disturbed as yours. You have men over there who are meant to be *brothers*—" he gestured at my father, Uncle Ethan and his brother, "—constantly bickering over foolish things." He then looked at my father, "and you. Father's are the protectors of their daughters. They must live to raise their young woman to become a positive contributor to their society no matter what the scenario. They must love their girls and cherish them and respect every inch of their soul and body and mind—"

My father gawked, "I don't think you have a right—"

"If fathers do not do that," Atem continued, ignoring my dad and making my heart skip a beat, "then they raise sons who won't do that, who will also raise sons who won't do that. And then one day you have a society like yours. Where men believe to be better than women."

I took a deep breath, wow.

Despite how immature he acted sometimes... Atem really had an intense way of looking at things. I don't know anyone who thinks the way he does. Maybe that had something to do with the way and place he was raised. Or maybe it had something to do with the fact that he was a King.

"And then there's you." I looked at him and saw him looking at my grandfather, who was surprisingly silent this entire time, "Grandparents are meant to be the

leaders of their home. Leaders who acknowledge and love and care for all of their kin. You however, treat your granddaughter like a stranger. Simply because she made a choice that you are uncomfortable with. Loving your family for who they are is the simplest of concepts. We learn that the moment we come out of our mothers, the moment our mothers hold us we learn what love is. And yet, a concept that is so primitive, so... important, you seem to be incapable of understanding. That is what I call *silly*. It is much more *silly* than a civilization who couldn't distinguish between the functions of a heart and brain."

Silence.

Everyone stared in shock. Even Kitana was lost for words.

Then my grandfather snorted, "you come into my house—"

"Okay," I said, standing up. "I think we should be going. I have a lot to study for and not enough time."

Atem looked at me but didn't argue. He got up too, "Thank you for the meal."

After saying my quick goodbyes, I grabbed a hold of Atem and escaped with him as quickly as I could. Oh god... the awkwardness was terrifying.

But I was smiling.

I was grinning actually.

Atem really showed them.

He was amazing.

And just as we reached the foyer, I heard my mother call me.

I hesitated and then turned around with a sigh, "yeah?"

When she reached us, she looked at Atem, "You're Egyptian?"

He simply nodded.

And then after a moment of hesitation, she sighed. "I apologize for my father's... as you called it... ignorance. He can be quite inconsiderate."

My eyebrows rose high on my forehead. My mother was never the one to oppose my grandfather or my father. What was up with her today?

"You have no reason to apologize."

My mother smiled, "I didn't get a chance to get to know you well. I hope there will be another occasion where I can come over and have a coffee or something like that."

Atem looked as surprised as I was, "sure. I'm sure we can come up with something."

My mom touched his shoulder and then turned to me, "I need to speak with you, May."

"Can it wait for later?" I asked, "I think we should hurry up and go."

She shook her head, "I need to talk to you *now*."

I hesitated once more but then nodded, "Okay." I handed the car keys to Atem, telling him to go wait in the car, and then I followed my mother up the stairs and into her old bedroom.

The room that once belonged to my mother was now practically empty aside from a bed, a vanity and some other furniture. There were no pictures, no posters, no clothes, nothing. It was a big room... but rather dull in comparison to mine back at home.

"I can't believe I'm saying this despite what just happened, but the young man seems like a nice boy."

I chuckled, "he is..." I said, "he's just... passionate about some things."

"I can tell. Your Aunty would have adored him if she was still here with us."

I nodded. She really would have. I'm sure Aunty Maya wanted to say some of those things to my grandfather for a very long time.

"Where did you meet him?"

I took a breath. I never thought to think of a meeting story. "Um... at school."

"When did you two start dating?"

"About a month ago."

"And you never thought it important to tell your mother?"

I shrugged, "I've never told you much before... how did you find out?"

"Grandma Seetha told me."

"You two talk?"

"Regularly," my mother surprised me by saying, "you wouldn't know but I do think of her as a mother."

I watched as my mom walked over to her old bed and sat down. She then patted the seat next to her.

After a moment of contemplation, I sat down next to her, "what's up with you?" I asked, "you're acting... different."

"Do you find it surprising for a mother to miss her daughter?"

"Um... no." But in her case, yes. Yes indeed.

She smiled at me.

Everyone always said my mom and I looked alike. But I never saw it. My mom was tall and thin and pretty despite the wrinkles and the tired expression that always stayed on her face.

For as long as I could remember, my mother was always tired. Maybe that was why she never really got a chance to be close with me. Because she was always tired.

"But seriously," I continued, "what's up? Atem's waiting for me."

She sighed, "I just..." There was a long pause, "I'm sorry."

"What?" It came out quick and sharp.

She was apologizing to me?

She looked at me, "I'm sorry I'm not there for you, May."

I was probably gawking.

"I know I should be calling and checking up on you but something has always held me back. Which is why I talk to Grandma Seetha. She keeps me updated, you know?"

No way.

"And," she took a breath, "when she told me you were dating a boy... I just... really realized how distant we were. What your boyfriend said about fathers... the same goes for mothers."

"Mom..."

"After your grandma told me... I thought about it and realized that if I were a good mother to you then I would have been the first one you told." She reached out and touched my hand, "I'm sorry. I guess it just *really* hit me... I'm eighteen, almost nineteen years late... but I'm going to try better."

I reached out and hugged her.

I was in such a state of shock, but I couldn't deny that I was thrilled. I never imagined that my mom would ever apologize to me.

She patted my back and then ran her fingers through my hair. "May... another thing I wanted to say is that your father *does* love you. He's very... very bad at showing it but he really does."

I pulled away and smiled, "I'll wait for him to apologize before I forgive him." Which, I was certain, would never happen.

My mom let out a small laugh before getting up and walking over to the vanity. She picked up a small box and returned to me.

"This was your Christmas gift, sweetheart," she said, opening it up and revealing a simple, yet lovely gold bracelet. "I got so busy on Christmas that I forgot to give it to you. What kind of mother am I?"

I laughed as she put the bracelet on me, "thanks mom. It's beautiful."

"I'm glad you think so," she smiled, "but I should return to the dinner table and try to calm your grandfather down."

"Good idea."

We walked down the stairs and when we got to the foyer, I saw Uncle Ethan putting on his coat.

My mom walked over to him, "leaving already?"

"I've got a lot of work to do. Besides, it's way too awkward for me right now."

My mom smiled and gave him a tight hug, "call me when you can."

My Uncle hugged her back, "thanks... for defending me."

"No need to thank me," she said as she pulled away. She then kissed his cheek, said goodbye to me and closed the door when Uncle Ethan and I left.

As we walked to our cars, Uncle Ethan suddenly patted my head. "May, I don't know what you've done but Atem has *really* grown."

I looked at him.

"He's not the same young man we knew a year ago."

"I don't think I did much, to be honest."

"Don't be so modest," Uncle Ethan responded, "a year with you has done him a lot of good."

I looked over at my brother's car where Atem was sitting, waiting rather patiently.

Uncle Ethan was right.

A year ago, he sat in that same spot, fuming and being rude and threatening to kill me.

Now...

He was totally different.

I smiled, "I guess you're right," I looked back at him, still smiling. "Sorry about the disaster of a night."

Uncle Ethan chuckled, "trust me, it would have been a disaster whether you two were there or not."

I let out a small laugh before I hugged Uncle Ethan and he kissed my forehead. We then said our goodbye and I returned to the car.

When I returned to the car, Atem chose not to complain about me taking so long. Instead, he looked at me. "Sorry," he said.

"For what?" I asked as I started up the car.

"For ruining your dinner—"

I laughed, "trust me, Tem, you just said what Uncle Ethan and I were thinking... kind of"

He was silent for a moment and then shook his head, "your grandfather is an *asshole*."

I laughed some more, "I agree."

As I pulled out of the massive driveway and onto the main road, we didn't say much.

But then Atem leaned against the window, crossing his arms and staring straight ahead. "What did he mean when he said that my people couldn't distinguish between the functions of a heart and brain?" He suddenly asked.

I looked over at him for a moment before looking back at the road. So he continued the argument without knowing what my grandfather meant? "From

what I recall, Ancient Egyptians thought that the heart controlled all the emotions and thinking and stuff like that."

"And it doesn't?"

I shook my head, "the brain actually does that stuff. Your heart just pumps blood around the body."

Atem didn't respond to that.

And for some reason, I felt like he was upset.



Chapter 27 - [Beauty and the Feeling in His Heart]

Hello my friends!!

Here is a nice long chapter for you guys to enjoy!! (I think you guys will like this chapter ;) hehe!!) I was going to split it into two chapters... But I thought MYEH, why make you guys wait! xD

Please don't forget to vote and comment and let me know what you all think! Also, don't forget to follow if you're enjoying the story =D!!!!!!!!!!!!

Thank you!!!!!!!!

Love, Luckycharms <3



It was a quiet ride home since for most of the ride, Atem was silently sleeping. However, as I exited the highway at the Oakville exit, Atem started to get all shifty.

I would glance over at him every minute or so and notice the uncomfortable expression on his face, and when we got to a stoplight, I reached over to try and wake him up.

But just as my hand touched his, his eyes snapped open and he let out a gasp, startling me.

"Are you okay?" I asked, quickly.

He looked around, a little disoriented. But when he snapped back into his senses, he leaned back in his seat and put his arm over his eyes. "Yes."

The light turned green.

I kept driving and despite him saying he was okay, I was still looking at him constantly, wondering what was wrong with him.

He was acting really weird for the past few days and I was really starting to worry now. He seemed really out of it and I don't think I need to mention the fact that he looked exhausted all the time.

"Do you have alcohol?" He suddenly asked.

I looked at him, then back at the road. He's been living with me for almost a year now; you'd think he knew I didn't have any. But this was the first time he'd ever asked me for alcohol, so I was kind of taken aback. "Umm, no."

"Can we purchase some?"

"I can't buy alcohol," I said, "I'm eighteen. You have to be nineteen to buy and

drink alcohol."

"I will buy it. Just take me to the store and give me the money. I didn't bring any."

He sounded serious. So I turned left at the next intersection and drove to the nearest liquor store.

When we got there, I parked the car and waited for Atem to straighten up his seat. "Come on," he said when he saw that I wasn't moving.

"I'm not even allowed to go in." At least, that's what I thought.

Atem rolled his eyes, "what is wrong with you people and your foolish rules. Just come on, you're turning nineteen in a month or so."

That wasn't wrong.

But that didn't make me feel any better.

So as Atem exited the car, I pulled down my cars visor, since it had a mirror on it, and ran my fingers through my hair as if that would make me look a month older.

Then I put on some bold red lipstick, which I thought made everyone look older, and got out of the car, money in my hand.

Atem was already holding the door of the shop open when I got out of the car, so I rushed to him and walked in first.

The cashier working there at the time looked over at us and I smiled a little nervously.

This was illegal. I think. Atem was accompanying a minor into a liquor store. He could be arrested.

But... Atem *was* right. I was turning nineteen in a month. So could we be let off the hook?

"Hey guys," the young man said, "we're closing in fifteen."

I looked at my watch, it was eleven-forty-four. "We won't take too long," I said to him before I walked off with a swing in my step, heels clacking rather loudly on the floor. Hopefully that made me look a month older.

Relieved that he didn't ask me for an ID, I rushed over to Atem, who was browsing through the stock.

"Why is there so much selection?" Atem asked as he read the labels. "It's unnecessary. Alcohol is alcohol."

I shrugged, "I don't know."

"Do you know which is the strongest?"

No. Of course I didn't. But I gave it my best guess, "Vodka?" I suggested. To be honest, I only knew of vodka, tequila, rum and that was about it.

Ro only ever drank Vodka, and she often got pretty drunk off of it. So it must have been pretty strong.

Atem looked at me with confusion, as if he never heard the term before.

And then I remembered that he probably *hadn't* ever heard of the term before. It was a relatively modern Russian beverage, after all.

I grabbed a hold of his hand and walked over to the vodka section of the shop.

When I spotted the familiar clear bottle with the clear liquid and red label, I picked it out. "This is Ro's favourite." It was 40% alcohol.

That was a lot, right?

He took the bottle from me, took the money and walked over to the cashier.

"Hey, and how are you today?" The cashier asked as he scanned the bottle and took the money from Atem.

Atem was rubbing his temples, he must have had a headache, "I'm not feeling particularly magnanimous today. But thanks for asking." He then walked off, bottle in hand, not even bothering with the change.

The young man blinked, probably not even understanding what Atem even said. That *was* quite the vocabulary.

I mean, if *that* didn't make Atem seem like a fifty year old, I don't know what would.

I, however, stood there and then rolled my eyes. "Sorry," I said to the cashier, "he's not in a good mood."

"No worries," the man said with a smile, "a lot of the folk that come here this late in the evening usually aren't."

I chuckled at that and took the change, "good night."

"Drink responsibly."

When I got to the car, I drove us home. The first thing I did when we got home was use the toilet, and when I came out, Atem had already poured an unsafe looking amount of the vodka into a mug.

He was sitting in the living room, the bottle on the coffee table, when I walked towards him.

Though he winced with every gulp, he was taking it down like a champ. But that was *not* a good thing.

I sat next to him. "Hey, 'Tem," I started, "that alcohol is *really* strong. I think you're drinking way too much."

"Don't be foolish," he said, "I've been drinking since I was a child. I can hold my liquor."

I feel like that was the classic line that would be stated before someone got *completely* wasted. Well, not the 'I've been drinking since I was a child' part, but the 'I can hold my liquor' part.

"Are you okay?" I asked, starting to worry some more. I didn't want him to damage his liver.

"I'm fine," he responded.

I let out a breath.

"But this alcohol is very strong," he said, looking at nothing. "I'll give you that much."

I smiled.

He then looked at me and held the mug out, "want a sip?"

I shook my head, "I can't drink, it's illegal." Plus, I didn't need a repeat of the Halloween incident.

Atem rolled his eyes. "You're not going to lose your spot in the afterlife simply because you took a sip of alcohol," he said. "Besides, you're turning nineteen in a month."

I hesitated.

To be honest, I kind of did want to give it a shot. (No pun intended.) And if I were to get tipsy with anyone, I'd want it to be with Atem.

Or Ro.

So I took his mug and since I knew it was gonna be hella nasty, I swallowed a big gulp all at once.

And obviously that didn't help. I coughed at the burning bitterness before getting up from the couch and running to the refrigerator. I grabbed some mango juice and gulped it down straight from the carton.

When the horrid taste and burning sensation in my throat had cleared, I turned around to the chuckling Atem with a glare. "That's disgusting."

"Wait till it hits you," Atem said with a smile.

I brought the mango juice with me and sat down next to him again.

After he took another gulp, he poured some more of it into the mug from the bottle and handed it to me.

"Atem, you're going to get wasted," I said.

"That's fine."

I was pretty sure he didn't fully understand what I meant, but he kept his arm extended, waiting for me to take a sip.

I didn't want to get drunk. But there was something strangely charming about the fact that we were sharing alcohol from the same cup.

It was weird.

But I guess it was one of those little things that made me happy.

So I took the mug from him, gulped down another gulp and chugged down the mango juice.

"That's it for me," I said, already feeling the buzz.

Atem smirked, "you're really bad at this."

"You can't blame me," I said, "I don't drink very often."

"Your society is strange," he said, "how do you deal with stress?"

"There are lots of other ways to deal with stress," I said. But then I realized something, "why? Are you stressed?"

Atem shrugged and then slouched back against the couch after placing the mug on the coffee table.

I started to realize that he was probably getting pretty drunk too. Especially since almost half the bottle was gone and I only took two gulps of that.

I crossed my legs on the couch, facing him. I was still wearing the dress but it was long enough to make sure that nothing was showing. "Really though, Atem. What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong."

"You've been acting strange for a while... why aren't you sleeping?"

"I don't know," he said, "maybe it's the bed."

"You can sleep on my bed if you want."

I meant it as we could switch beds. I would take his and he could take mine. But Atem clearly took it as meaning something else, which he showed through the slight shock on his face.

And for whatever reason, I decided not to correct him.

He smiled a small smile, "I guess we could try that."

I still didn't correct him. Though I admittedly started to worry a little.

Uncle Ethan's warnings started to play in my head. Of course, I didn't *actually* think Atem was going to attempt to seduce me while I was not in my right mind in order to get into my pants— or skirt —and then leave.

But I *did* wonder what could possibly happen now that we were both intoxicated.

I mean, I've never *actually* gotten *really* drunk before. What would I know?

And every second that passed made me feel more and more dizzy.

Which meant he was probably feeling the same. If not worse.

I sighed.

"What's wrong?" He suddenly asked.

I looked at him and then chuckled, "nothing."

"Why did you sigh?"

I shrugged, "because I needed to?"

"Oh."

I smiled at him, "you know, it was pretty awesome when you insulted my grandfather."

He smirked.

"No one has ever insulted my grandfather like that before."

"I wasn't afraid of him."

"Clearly."

"I don't know how you spent your life dealing with people like that," he said, "I would have had them executed."

I rolled my eyes. "Of course *you* would have. But I'm not an Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh."

"But even if you were, I don't think you'd execute them."

"No... I probably wouldn't."

It was really quiet for a moment. So quiet that I could only hear our breathing. But then Neferkiti came out of nowhere and jumped onto the couch. She climbed onto my lap, in-between my crossed legs and purred before curling up into a ball and falling asleep.

"What you said about Ancient Egypt," I said, "it kind of made me want to go there."

He just nodded his head.

"Even though life seemed kind of tough, you make it seem like people were generally happy. I wish I could see it."

"You'd like it," he said. "I think you would. But it's a waste of time to talk about it. It's not like there's any way for me to return."

"Well, you don't know that," I said, "what if the wizard comes back and say something like 'listen, Akhenatem, I totally misjudged you. You're totally a cool guy. If you'd like I'll revert the curse and send you back home' then that's your ticket home."

Akhenatem smirked, "I don't think something like that would happen."

"It may. And if it does, then maybe that'll give me a chance to see Egypt too."

"If you were to come with me to Egypt, you might never be able to come home," he said. "Would you still come?"

I noticed he was staring at me, and though I was slightly intoxicated, I decided to answer honestly. "Well if I were to leave for good... Uncle Ethan would miss me. And Grandma Seetha. And Ro and Alec and my brother and maybe my mom. And maybe even Blake."

But aside from them... I don't think anyone would miss me here too much.

However... not being able to talk to the people I love... forever? That was... scary.

Was that how Atem felt?

Within a moment, he lost everyone who meant anything to him.

"So that's a no?" he asked. "You wouldn't come with me?"

"I didn't say no," I said quickly. "But before I come up with an answer, tell me exactly what life would be like over there for me."

Atem hesitated before he spoke. "Well, for starters, you wouldn't be wearing outfits like this," he pointed at my dress. "And judging by the way you do dress over here, I don't think you'll enjoy the clothing there very much."

"Why not?" From what I see in the pictures, they looked like white dresses.

"The cloth is very thin. You can see most of a woman's skin underneath it."

Okay, yeah. That wouldn't be so exciting for me. "Okay fine, but assuming that I get used to that... what would life be like?"

Atem thought for a moment. "The first thing you'd have to do would be to learn the language. I don't know if the wizard would be kind enough to allow you to know how to speak it prior to arriving like he had done for me."

I chuckled. "But that won't be too hard, right?"

"Wrong," Atem said firmly, "my language is much more complex and much

more difficult than your English language. Though being immersed in it might help slightly, I do think it would take you a *long* time to become fluent."

So basically, me going to Egypt with him would be a bad idea. "What else?"

"I guess... after that you'd have to make the option of whether or not you'd want to live in the palace or live in the village."

"I think I'd want a mix of both." I mean, I've never lived in either a palace or a village before.

"In the village setting, you will be welcomed quite easily. I see no problem for you there. Village folk are welcoming and kind people. However, I feel like you will have more difficulty at the palace."

"Why?"

"Well, there are rules you must follow as a palace dweller. It isn't a simple life." Atem turned his body to face me, setting his mug down on the coffee table. "For example, you must be able to rise with me when the sun rises to conduct the daily rituals—"

"What time is that?"

"Between four and five in the morning."

I rolled my eyes. *Seriously?*

He nodded. "Then there's the problem of my Royal Court. Despite the fact that I am a full-grown man, they are very protective over me. I don't think it would be easy for them to accept a foreigner to be near me. You'd have to win their trust."

I rolled my eyes again, "gosh, why is it such a hassle?"

He smirked, "you can't blame them though. The last time a foreigner was allowed into the court, half of my family was murdered."

Okay fine.

I guess that makes sense.

"And you wouldn't exactly be able to sit around and do nothing. You'd have to find something to do. A job of some sort—"

"Teaching?" I suggested.

He nodded, "I guess that would be fine. Once you've learned the language yourself, you could teach."

"I could teach English."

"There would be no purpose of teaching English to my people," Atem said, firmly again. "That language does not exist in my lands."

True. "Well then... maybe I could teach science."

"I'd rather my people not be immersed in the depressing and complicated things such as *chemistry*."

I laughed, "but if they knew science, they would know that the brain is what we use to feel and think. Not the heart."

Atem watched me for a second. And right then, Neferkiti lifted herself up from my lap and jumped onto the other couch before returning to Atem's room. She probably wasn't enjoying our conversation.

"How about you go into the villages and teach people to read instead?" Atem continued after Neferkiti disappeared. "After all, most people in Egypt can't read." He put an arm behind me on the back of the couch without thinking.

To be honest, I didn't think much of it either.

"And then I could change history!" I said. "I could make Ancient Egypt a less illiterate society!"

Atem rolled his eyes, "there are way too many people in Egypt for you to be able to do something like that in your lifetime."

"Thanks for the support, jerk."

He smiled. "So? If you had the chance, would you come to Egypt with me?"

I shrugged. "Why not, I guess," I said. "It's not like I'm doing anything worthwhile over here. Besides, if you were to suddenly leave then... I dunno. I can't really imagine a life without you anymore."

I said it really quickly. I guess I talked fast when I got drunk. But nonetheless... I was pretty understandable. And I didn't mean for it to sound so *romantic*.

But it did.

And surprisingly enough, I didn't mind it.

"Really?" Atem asked.

I nodded. "Things are so different now that you're here... it would be so weird if you suddenly left. For good," I said. "And I don't want you to leave."

The alcohol had officially hit me, even though I didn't drink that much. It was becoming difficult for me to phrase my sentences properly.

And when I looked back at Atem, he was smiling. "Well good. I guess you should be pleased that the wizard is dead and that I'll not be going anywhere."

I smiled, "I guess I should be."

He then leaned forward and kissed my lips. I've almost always been the one who initiated the kisses, aside from the first two times. So this should have been a little shocking.

But I wasn't shocked.

I was intoxicated.

So that probably was why I wasn't shocked.

Of course, I kissed him back and despite being still fairly new at this, I think I reacted well when he deepened the kiss.

I could taste the alcohol in his kiss but I didn't mind it. It actually wasn't bad at all. In fact, it was perfectly lovely. Though I did wonder how he was going to react to the taste of mango that would come from my lips. From what I

remembered, he didn't like mangos. (Weirdo.)

But he didn't seem to care.

My heart was beating so hard that I could feel the thumping in my face and when I wrapped my arms around his neck, his body was unbelievably warm against mine.

It was fantastic.

After what felt like only a couple seconds into the kiss, I almost didn't even notice him swiftly lift me up. He was still kissing me when he set me back down, but now I was lying back, head against the arm of the couch.

He was on top of me.

Obviously, the skirt of the dress that I was still wearing had rose all the way up since my legs were wrapped around his waist.

And you can imagine that my heart was in a frenzy.

I know I thought earlier that I wouldn't want to do anything... *crazy*... with Atem. Not when we were drunk.

But at that very moment, I had to admit that I wouldn't have cared.

I wouldn't have cared if we were to have sex. So what if I was a virgin and would have no idea what I was doing? Maybe I would regret it in the morning. Or maybe I would regret it immediately after... I didn't care.

All that mattered to me at that moment was that he was on top of me, kissing me. And I liked it.

Maybe it was because I was drunk. I couldn't make good decisions when my mind was in this state.

However... despite this side of me that I have never met... nothing happened.

He kissed my lips, deeply and rather intensely. All I could feel was him on top of me and all I could smell was the scent of his skin. And that was perfectly

wonderful.

Then he pulled away and kissed my neck too while my fingers touched his hair. And oh goodness was Ro telling the truth when she said neck kisses were the best.

And when he kissed my neck I had thought for sure that next would be my chest and then I'd be naked and then I'd lose my virginity.

That was how it happened in all the movies and books after all.

But it didn't.

He kissed my lips again. And then he pulled away and sighed before rubbing his face with his hands.

I sat up quickly, adjusting my skirt as I put my feet down on the floor. I was definitely out of breath as my heart continued to beat wildly and I was dizzy too.

We were silent for a moment and then I noticed that he was staring at me.

"What?" I asked, confused.

I had absolutely no idea what I was supposed to do after a make-out session like that.

He let out a breath and then smiled before he put his arm on the back of the couch and his head in his hand. "I've never taken a girl's virginity before," he said, rather softly.

I was probably blushing, "you're such a loser."

"Really though—"

"And you probably never will," I said, trying to play hard to get, "I can assure you that much."

He laughed. It was one of his wholehearted, genuine laughs.

And then he sighed once more before moving forward and surprising me by resting his head on my lap, facing away from my body. "Definitely not today,"

he said, "I'm too tired to think."

I was too shocked to think.

Atem's head was on my lap.

Ohmygod.

How in the world was this guy supposed to be an evil pharaoh?

"Stopping myself from making love to a girl after all these months... I truly must be going crazy."

I flicked the back of his head with my finger, making him wince and look up at me with a glare.

But I smirked back and that made him smile. He turned back around and closed his eyes. "If my bed is the problem then maybe I *should* try something new."

For obvious reasons, I didn't argue with him.

I let him sleep on my lap.

And within moments, he had fallen asleep.

The silence and the fact that it was well past midnight made me fall asleep very soon after he did... but it didn't last very long.

I think an hour or so had past, and the heat and the romance lingered for the most part. But when I felt Atem's head leave my lap very quickly, and my hand, which was on his chest, be practically thrown off, I was startled awake.

Atem was sitting upright, and since the lights of the apartment were still on, I could see that he was sweating.

A nightmare?

I was suddenly reminded of how he woke up in the car earlier and as he took deep breaths I rubbed his back, "are you okay?" I asked, still half asleep.

He let out a frustrated breath before rubbing his temples with his finger and

thumb.

Nightmares?

"Are you having nightmares, Atem?" I asked, still stroking his back.

He pushed my hand away. "I'm fine."

I narrowed my eyes, "no you're not. You haven't been getting any sleep recently. Is it because of nightmares?"

He didn't respond.

So they *were* nightmares.

"Have you been having them consistently?" I asked. "Like, every night?"

He kept rubbing his temples, "yes. But it doesn't matter—"

"Since when?" I asked, wondering how many nights of disturbed sleep this guy has been having. That was surely bad for his health!

He shrugged.

"Since when, 'Tem?" I asked, "if you're having reoccurring nightmares constantly then we may have to go to the doctor."

He groaned, but he answered me. "Since that night... when you broke the glass... you woke me up from the first one."

I hesitated.

The night that I thought I saw the wizard?

A slight panic rose in me but I tried not to show it. Instead, I bit my lip for a moment before reaching behind my neck and unclasping the ankh necklace that I had never taken off since my aunty had given it to me.

Without asking him, I started to put it around his neck.

"What are you doing?" He fussed as he tried to push me away.

"Stop it!" I argued, "this might help."

Atem looked down at the necklace after I had put it on him and then back at me. "Don't be so foolish—"

"My aunty gave that to me when she was at the hospital before she died. I was having nightmares too since I was so worried about her... and she gave me the necklace, telling me that it'll get rid of the nightmares."

Atem didn't say anything.

"And it worked."

"That's..." I knew what he wanted to say.

That what I said sounded stupid. But I also knew that he stopped himself because he knew that Aunty Maya meant a lot to me.

"It wouldn't hurt to try it out," I said.

He didn't argue to that. And when he didn't speak again, I reached out and held his head between my hands and returned it to my lap.

He snorted, but didn't pull away. Instead, he turned in my lap to look up at me.

"Go back to sleep. I'm sleepy," and still dizzy, might I add. "Don't worry, Aunty Maya and I will scare the nightmares away."

He kept looking up at me, and I looked back at him, waiting for his smart-ass response. But he didn't say anything. Instead, he looked at me with a deep and thoughtful stare, and it lasted for a couple moments.

"I think your people are wrong," he finally said.

Without thinking, I pushed his hair away from his forehead before placing my hand on it. "About what?"

"About your feelings and thoughts and emotions being in your brain."

I smiled.

He sounded like a kid. And I kinda wanted to kiss his forehead but my back wouldn't be able to bend that far down while he was lying on my lap. So instead, I just smiled and ran my fingers through his hair.

I was going to say that that was fine. He could think what he wanted. Especially since I didn't want to upset him more after he had a nightmare.

But before I could say anything, the alcohol made him continue to speak his mind.

"Because I think I'm in love with you," he said with a gentle look in his eyes.

My eyes widened and my heart skipped a beat.

"And I feel it over here," he placed his finger on his chest, right over where his heart would be, with his eyes still looking at me. Then he moved his finger to his forehead. "Not here."

I knew it was drunk Atem talking. He would never say something like that while he was sober.

But nonetheless, as cheesy as this sounds, those words made my heart race more than it ever had done before. Ever.

I was still smiling, though I knew that the smile couldn't really show how truly happy his words made me. And I even managed to push the thought of that wizard out of my mind. I wasn't going to let a dead man ruin this feeling for me.

I never imagined in my life that someone saying this to me would make me so happy. Even if he added 'I think' before it.

It still made me happy, and I couldn't really understand why. But then again, no one had ever said that to me. No boy, at least. And I guess I never really thought much about someone telling me that they loved me.

But right now, I was thrilled.

Even if he was still kinda drunk.

So I kept smiling while I continued to stroke his forehead with my fingers.

But by the time I had it in me to respond, he was already drifting away, back to sleep.

"I feel it over there too," I said, softly.

And just moments after he fell asleep, I heard a little bit of thunder and suddenly, it was pouring rain outside.

It was the first spring rainfall of the year, better late than never... and it would wash away the last of the snow that refused to melt.

I closed my eyes and listened to the pitter-patter of the rain... and I realized that I've never, ever been happier in my life than at that moment.

Chapter 28 - [Beauty and the New Job]

My body was aching like no tomorrow when I woke up the next morning. I had a headache, my shoulders were sore from sleeping upright, and my legs were numb though Atem was nowhere in sight when I woke up.

At least I was still a virgin, right?

I found myself in my bed, but assumed that I only recently got there since it was still pretty cold. When I stretched, I just made my body feel worse. So I stayed there for a bit, staring at the ceiling.

And then I thought of Atem.

After all that craziness that happened in one night... from dissing my grandfather to telling me that he thought he was in love with me... of course I wanted to see him.

So I got up and made my way out of my bedroom.

He was walking out of the washroom right then. He had a towel on his head and he looked a lot fresher this morning than he had in a while. When he noticed me, he stopped to look at me.

We looked at each other for a moment and I noticed that he was still wearing my aunties' ankh necklace. Judging by the fact that he looked better, I assumed that my magical aunty had gotten it to work.

And when my eyes drifted back to his face, he let out a chuckle and looked away.

I was gonna ask him why he was laughing. I was hoping he would say

something nice, especially after all that happened the night before. And of course, I wanted to know what he was thinking.

But I didn't need to ask.

"Oh Amun," Atem started as he looked back at me. "You always look so horrible right when you wake up."

Without thinking, almost out of instinct, I kicked him in the shin.

Of course, Atem was infuriated with me for kicking him. And to be honest, I'm sure it didn't hurt as much as he was making it out to be. I didn't kick him *that* hard.

So yeah, we were fighting now.

Though it was only a couple hours ago that he told me he thinks he loves me.

Of course, I didn't try to bring that up again. He was drunk last night and I didn't want to say something that may embarrass me.

So I ignored him all morning.

But eventually, as the day went on, I gave up on pretending to be mad and sat down next to him on the couch. "So, did you sleep well?"

"Fine," he mumbled. He was clearly still mad.

"Oh c'mon! I didn't hit you that hard!"

"You never put your foot on a Pharaoh."

"Those kinds of rules don't apply to a Pharaohs' girlfriend—" I really liked the sound of that, "—besides, you shouldn't be calling me ugly."

"Well I'm not going to lie," Atem argued back, "you're not particularly appealing in the *mornings*. I didn't say all the time!"

I rolled my eyes, "okay, forget it!" This guy was never going to change. "Did the

necklace help?"

He shrugged. "I guess," he said before downing another glass of water. This was like, his hundredth cup. He must have had a bad hangover.

I was pretty fine now, thank goodness.

"So no nightmare?"

He shook his head.

I smiled, "good." I then turned in my seat to face him, sitting in the exact same spot I was sitting in last night, "so... what were these nightmares about?"

"Just... things," he simply said. "None of your business."

I rolled my eyes again, "you seemed pretty shaken up, Tem," I said. "It'd be a good idea to talk about it. Get it off your chest, you know?"

I also kind of wanted to know what freaked him out so much. I mean, it didn't seem like it was easy to scare this guy.

"I don't want to talk about it."

I rolled my eyes and got up, "you never wanna talk about things."

"Why is it so dark outside?" he suddenly asked. "It's the middle of the day."

I looked at him as I walked towards the kitchen. "It was raining all of last night," I said. "I think it's gonna rain soon again."

"Raining?" Atem asked. "You mean no more snow?"

I smiled as I started to make lunch. "Yeah, I'll be able to ride that bike pretty soon."

Atem fell silent.

"Spring is kind of late this year," I mean, April was already coming to an end. "Last year, by the end of April it was pouring like crazy and the grass was already green again."

Atem seemed to sigh in relief.

When I looked at him, I chuckled. I didn't blame Atem for not liking the cold weather. I mean, he was born and raised in a desert. Even people born and raised here, like myself, had lots of trouble dealing with the cold.

I mean, I was relieved too. I loved when it snowed... but how could you not love the summer?

And besides, I finally get to ride that fantastic new bike of mine that I still hadn't taken out of Atem's room yet.

After we ate, both Atem and I headed out to Grandma Seetha's shop. It was Saturday, but as always we still had to head out to work.

I put on my bright red rain boots and Atem didn't have a pair so he just wore his winter boots. And that seemed perfectly fine.

I took my gigantic clear umbrella with pastel polka dots all over it, just in case it rained.

And it was a good thing I did. Because the second we stepped off of the buildings property, the rain started to drizzle.

Umbrella's started shooting up into the air, mine included, because moments after the drizzle commenced, it began to pour. As I walked, however, I noticed that Atem wasn't with me.

When I turned around, I saw him standing there in the rain, getting soaked.

"What are you doing?" I asked as I rushed back to him, holding my umbrella over his head. "You're going to get sick."

He gave me a skeptical look. "From what," he asked, "water?"

Okay, so I too didn't exactly believe in the whole 'you'll get sick if you get wet from the rain' thing. So I didn't argue with him. "But really, what are you doing?"

He shrugged as we started walking, "it's been some time since I've seen rain."

And then I remembered that he was from a desert. In the time that he had been here, it *had* rained a couple times. I mean, he did arrive in May of last year. But he barely ever left the house during that time and to be honest, I think this was the first time he's ever been outside in rain.

"How often does it rain in Egypt?"

"Not often," Atem said. "When it did rain, however, my people were very happy."

"People here run for their lives when it rains."

"Another truly strange habit of your people."

I smiled.

"But this contraption," Atem said, looking up at my massive umbrella. "Whoever created this must have been a genius."

Now I laughed.

So according to what he's said in the past, the guys who created the Internet and the T.V. and electricity weren't geniuses. But the guy who created the umbrella was.

"It's simple, yet effective," he continued. "I don't know why we didn't think of something similar."

I reached down and held his hand. "Well, you probably had no need to," I said. "Like you said, your people liked the rain. My people don't."

He nodded. "True."

We walked in silence after that... though it wasn't uncomfortable or awkward. The one thing I've noticed about Atem and I was that I think we were close enough to not be awkward in each other's presence. There was no longer a need to maintain a conversation. We could be completely quiet, thinking to ourselves, and it didn't really matter. It wasn't awkward.

But as I reflected on that, Atem spoke up. "Egypt fell," he said out of nowhere.

I looked up at him.

He looked rather distressed though he also had an expression on his face that seemed to show that he was trying to hide how he felt. He'd gotten really bad at hiding his emotions over time.

Or maybe I've just been getting better at reading him.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"The nightmares," he continued. "They were about my people."

I was kind of glad he decided in the end that he *was* going to talk to me about it. "What happened?"

He shrugged, "since I got here... I just kept trying to tell myself that it wasn't true."

"That Egypt fell?"

He nodded. "But it is true. I've read it in the books, and I keep getting reminded of it in my sleep."

I squeezed his hand, not really knowing what to say.

"I know it's impossible, but I wish I could fix things," he sighed, "It's my fault."

I hesitated.

"Thousands of people were killed... men were tortured, women were raped and little children were taken as slaves," he started to tighten his grip on my hand. It kind of hurt but I pretended it didn't. "And it's my fault."

"It's not as simple as that, 'Tem," I responded, "you didn't want this to happen. It's the wizard that did it."

"Nonetheless, my actions did result in the death of many people. I *did* act inappropriately. I had petty thieves executed and possibly innocent men jailed simply from accusations that I didn't properly look into." he started to glare at nothing. "Sometimes, deep down... I knew that an accused man was innocent. I

just knew it. But I did still allow for him to get thrown into prison. I thought it would scare people into submission... but in the end it was simply a crime on my part. I should have been the one who was jailed or executed."

I didn't know what to say to that.

Sure... that was pretty mean of him. But he acknowledges that now. And he definitely seemed sorry about it. Did that not matter at all?

"But... despite all that I have done... one thing I know is that I would never have allowed for a young, innocent child to get hurt. *Never*."

"I believe you, Akhenatem."

"Some of your scholar's... they say that I ran away, knowing that Egypt was going to be attacked. That I left everyone and ran."

We stopped walking since we had arrived outside of Grandma Seetha's shop, but he continued to speak, now looking straight at me.

Almost as if he were trying to convince me that he was telling me the truth.

"I would *never* have ran. If my country was invaded by foreigners with the intention of massacring my people... I would *never* have ran off. I would have fought. I swear I would have—"

I stepped forward and hugged him tightly, placing the huge umbrella onto the ground and letting the rain fill into it. I didn't really care that we were in the middle of the sidewalk, probably annoying the people who were passing by. All I cared about was the fact that Atem needed to know that it was okay. "I believe you Atem," I said. "Really, I do."

He hugged me back.

"I know you aren't a bad person. You made a mistake and everyone makes mistakes. But as soon as you admit that you were wrong, you're already a step closer to redeeming yourself."

Atem sighed and I felt his chin rest on the top of my head.

"You're a hero to me, Atem," I said as I looked up at him with a smile. "You protected your mother and your brother when they needed you and you became a King when you were so young. You may have made some mistakes but, to me, you're amazing."

He pondered that though when I finished speaking and then bent down and kissed my lips. I felt completely satisfied. I think what I said made him feel better and that was good enough.

Of course, what made it better was that it was the truth. That *was* how I felt.

Even if he called me ugly this morning.

When he pulled away, he looked at me with a strange expression. "I don't understand..." he started. But then he stopped talking, as if he were trying to find the right words.

But I smiled and grabbed his hand with one of my hands and my umbrella with the other. "C'mon, we don't want to be late."

He didn't say anything else as he followed me into my Grandma's shop.

The bell on the door jingled, making Grandma Seetha look up from the cookies she was icing. But to my surprise, Uncle Ethan was there too, leaning against the counter, his back towards us.

When he turned around, he gave me his usual warm smile. "Hey, Princess."

I waved at him, "sorry again about dinner." I said quickly. I knew he wasn't upset at all, but I still felt the need to say it.

He chuckled, "actually, I'm here to discuss something related to that dinner with you."

"Really?" I asked.

When we got to the counter, Atem stopped walking and crossed his arms, obviously wanting to hear what my uncle had to say.

Uncle Ethan nodded. "I was thinking about what we talked about and... I wanted

to ask you what you thought of Atem *actually* working for me."

My eyebrows rose.

Yes, the lie of Atem being my uncle's PhD student was a pretty good lie... but it was that exact lie that created the entire mess at dinner.

Plus... Atem? A PhD student? That would be hard to imagine.

"Doesn't he need to go to school if he wants to get a PhD?" I asked. Who would pay for that? I definitely couldn't afford it!

Uncle Ethan chuckled. "Oh no, I didn't mean as an actual PhD student. But a research assistant... in a sense," Uncle Ethan said, "it wouldn't be a real important position or anything, since that would involve getting him an identification and providing transcripts... all of which he doesn't have with him. But instead, it would just be helping with simple, yet important stuff. Translations, interpretations... all those things."

"Oh!" Well, that didn't sound so bad.

Uncle Ethan looked at Atem. "I would greatly appreciate any help you'd have to offer, Atem," he said. "If you're okay with this then we can get started today. I came here to ask Grandma Seetha if she'd be okay with me stealing you from her and she thinks it'd be fun for you too."

Atem looked at me.

And I nodded. "It'll be fun. I feel like you'd be wasting your talents here so going with Uncle Ethan would be good for you!"

Now Atem looked back at Uncle Ethan. "I suppose that's fine."

Uncle Ethan smiled, looking pleased. "Alright! We'll get started today! You're going to be such a great help."

And with that, Atem was off with Uncle Ethan.

At first, I thought this was fantastic. Atem would have something more productive to do since cake baking wasn't exactly his forte. He would be doing

something more useful... something he could relate too. And maybe this would be good. Maybe working with things he understands and can relate too was a great thing.

But I didn't realize till a couple days in that Atem working with Uncle Ethan would mean that we saw each other less.

I mean, yeah, we lived together. But him not working at Grandma Seetha's with me anymore took a large chunk of our time together away.

And that sucked.

But... despite the fact that he never said it out loud, I could tell that just after one week of working with Uncle Ethan, he looked a lot happier and less bored. Clearly he found his new work much more entertaining than cleaning and doing minor chores at the cake shop.

He liked his new job.

And I guess that was all that mattered.

After all that's been going on, at least he was a little happy.

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 29 - [Gift Hunting and the Pharaoh]

HELLO BEAUTIFUL FRIENDS!!

As always, I TRULY appreciate that you all were patient with me! I actually have one more exam left as of this point but managed to get this chapter done for you guys!! But as an apology for the late upload, I will have the next chapter up for you by this Thursday!!!! So if you find this chapter to be a bit of a cliffhanger, NO WORRIES! You won't have to wait too long! =D!

Just a reminder, this chapter is from Atem's perspective!

ENJOY!! And don't forget to vote, comment and follow!! =D!!!

Thanks again for your support and wish me luck on my last exam! <3!

Love,

Luckycharms <3



May's birthday was coming up. I knew this because I arrived here on her birthday and the one-year 'anniversary' of my arrival was approaching. Also because as I sat in Uncle Ethan's office, translating some hieroglyph's to help him out, I noticed the big circle over the third of May. Over it was written 'MAY'S BIRTHDAY!' in messy writing.

And now I wondered what on earth I was going to do about it.

I had spent enough time here to understand how birthdays worked. They often involved celebrations with the cakes that May bakes along with a lot of presents.

And that meant I had to get May a present.

I rolled my eyes at the thought, though I was alone in Uncle Ethan's room and no one was there to see my annoyance.

Though Christmas was five months ago, it felt like yesterday. And she only

recently started to use the bicycle that I got her.

I tried to think of something to get her. Something she would like.

It wasn't that I couldn't think of what to get her. In fact, I think the problem was that I could think of *a lot* of things to get her.

Books. Stuffed toys. Massive wall paintings. Fragrances. Jewelry. Clothing. Makeup. She would even be satisfied with food.

I guess the problem was that she liked so many things that I couldn't think of what she would want.

But... the spirit of Birthday's was not meant to be revolving around getting gifts for people you care about. I think it was more for appreciating the fact that said person had survived another calendar year.

And of course, by appreciating this fact, the person whose birthday it is can acknowledge that you are happy they survived.

So, May survived another year of her life. She was turning nineteen, which in this world meant that she could legally drink alcohol, and I guess my duty was to make sure she knows that I'm happy she survived another year.

I blinked, realizing that I had started to stare into space and lose focus. I had a lot of work to do and not much time to be losing focus.

Yes, Uncle Ethan had assigned me with a lot of work. Conveniently, it was not difficult work.

Originally, my instructions were to translate work that had yet to be translated. That was easy. However, after reporting some mistakes that I had seen in works that had already been translated, Uncle Ethan assigned me to editing.

That was a bit more challenging.

It was difficult to assess work that had already been translated because it was done by *amateurs*. Also, sometimes the way these amateurs translated things were hard to understand. They often translated things incorrectly, making sentences incoherent.

In fact, the easiest thing for me to do was to translate it all over again. Unfortunately, Uncle Ethan asked me not to be so harsh. Apparently his PhD student worked very hard on these translations.

So here I was, sitting at the small desk with the comfortable chair, which Uncle Ethan had prepared for me in his office.

He had mentioned to me that he did not want me to sit in the external part of the office, where all the other PhD students sat, particularly because he worried that I might say something inappropriate.

Despite being offended with his reasoning, I was pleased with his decision. I'd rather not sit with those other people. I would be forced to talk to them, and I did not want to have to do that.

Aside from that, I had been sleeping quite well these days. May often said there was no such thing as magic in her world but this necklace of hers clearly had some sort of magic in it. It was able to fend off those nightmares that kept me up when nothing else worked.

That *must* have been magic.

I kept the necklace with the ankh on it around my neck at all times. Apart from being a nicely fashioned necklace, there was also something about it that made me feel... satisfactory.

Again, if that wasn't magic, then what else could it possibly be?

Of course, whenever Uncle Ethan was around, I kept the necklace hidden underneath my clothing. I did not want to make him uncomfortable... after all, this *was* the necklace that once belonged to his deceased wife. It would be strange for him to see me in possession of it.

Uncle Ethan had left for a while to go grab himself a coffee. He asked me if I wanted one and I said no. He had already purchased one for me earlier in the day and I didn't like the way coffee made me feel when I drank it any time after morning.

So when he walked in, he was only carrying one coffee cup.

He smiled at me with the usual look of exhaustion in his eyes. It always baffled me to see how tired the people of this world were. All they did was sit for most of the day, yet they always looked so tired. There were construction workers back at home that would spend the entire day in the hot sun building colossal monuments and they almost always looked livelier than these people.

"How's it all going?" he asked me after he took a seat at his desk.

"Fine," that was often the answer I gave.

The good thing about Uncle Ethan was that he usually didn't pester me with conversation. He usually left me alone to do my own thing and I liked that.

However, he clearly looked like he had something he wanted to say to me right then and there.

And as I expected, after a short moment of silence, he opened his mouth to talk.

But before he could even say anything, there was a loud knocking on his office door and then one of his PhD students, Alison, opened the door.

This was the first time a student opened the door prior to Uncle Ethan saying, "come in," so I was rather surprised by her sudden entrance.

"Ethan!" She said, referring to him by his first name. I found this odd. Uncle Ethan was technically her teacher and in Egypt, you would never refer to your teacher by their first name. But maybe this was what Uncle Ethan wanted.

Uncle Ethan hesitated, "what is it?"

The girl and the door grinned.

This blonde haired girl was the one whose translations were wrong and I needed to fix. She was rather annoying and I tried to stay away from her as much as possible. All she ever really liked to talk about was herself, her research or how lucky she thought I was for being named Atem.

"Ohmigod-ohmigod! I can't believe it! We *just* got a package! It came in a *big* orange envelope!"

I had no idea what she said. She spoke way too fast for me to understand.

But Uncle Ethan understood. I could tell because the expression on his face changed.

"The DNA results are here!" She squealed, this part a little more clear than the rest. But it didn't matter whether she was clear or not. I had no idea what a D-N-A result was. Nor did I care, for that matter.

But Uncle Ethan stood up, a little bit of worry on his face. "Right," he said. "Why don't you head out, I'll be there in a second and we can look at it together."

Alison nodded her head eagerly before skipping off.

Uncle Ethan then looked at me. "Thanks for your help today, Atem. But you can head home now. I'll give you a call tomorrow?"

I stood up immediately, a little glad to be able to go home. "Yes, that's fine."

Uncle Ethan gave me a strange, awkward smile... which was rather odd for him. His smiles were usually very warm and friendly. But nonetheless, I dropped all my things and left.

Normally, Uncle Ethan would drop me off, but there were some days where I would walk home. But whatever the case, I had gotten to know the way home.

The streets of this nation were easy to understand. You either had to turn left, right or go straight. And sometimes, if I missed a turn, I would have to go backwards.

In some of the newer cities in Egypt, we had roads like this. But other cities were not the case, so it was difficult to navigate for some people. However, I never had that problem. I had an excellent sense of memory.

But as I walked home, all I could think about now was what I was going to get May for her birthday. I felt this strange feeling of needing to impress her, though I kept trying to convince myself that the Christmas gift was impressive enough.

My convincing clearly worked, because I felt stress and annoyance.

I figured that just purchasing a stuffed toy would be enough. I'm sure she'd be satisfied with just that.

But just as I had finally almost convinced myself to settle with that and stop worrying about it, I saw a car pull up next to me.

When I looked over, I recognized the car immediately. It was Alec's.

The window came down and Alec gave me a smile. "Hey! Need a ride?"

I could have just walked. May's apartment was not that far away. But I nodded and got into his car anyways.

Alec had always been very friendly with me. He was a good man with a big heart. There was never a time where he actually annoyed me. So yes, I tolerated him.

Today however, he seemed extremely talkative. It wasn't so much that it annoyed me. But it was more than usual.

"Have you gotten May's gift yet?" He asked, directing the previous conversation of how my job was going, to my current stressful situation.

"No."

"Any ideas?"

"No," I said, despite the fact that I had almost convinced myself of getting her a stuffed toy.

"Hmm," he smiled as he drove. "I know how that feels, buddy."

I assumed he did.

I mean, his relationship to Aurora could be comparable to mine with May. At least in these modern standards.

"Want some help?"

I was surprised by the question, so I looked at him with a surprised expression.

"I've been told I'm a good gift shopper," he gave me a quick wink before looking back at the road. "Besides, May always likes my gifts, maybe I can help you out."

Despite the feeling of being defeated, I was *not* going to deny this offer.

I couldn't disagree with the fact that Alec definitely knew May very well. He knew her longer than I had. He was also the boyfriend of May's best friend and that made his knowledge of her even better. After all, it wouldn't be a surprise if Aurora spoke of May to Alec.

"Yes. I'd like your help."

"Great," Alec said. "Are you free tomorrow morning? I mean, her birthday is the day after tomorrow so we should probably go tomorrow."

"Yes," I said. "I can go then."

"Perfect."

And with that, I felt some relief.

May wasn't particularly subtle with her desire to know what I had purchased for her for her birthday. While I sat on the couch that evening and read a story about these beings called Vampires, she came up to me and asked me directly, "so... what did you get me?"

I rolled my eyes. "Nothing," I said, truthfully. But I think she thought I was not being serious.

"Liar," she said, lifting Neferkiti into her arms and running her fingers through her fur. "I love presents."

I found it remarkably entertaining that she didn't hide this fact. Most people acted like they never wanted gifts.

"I'm serious," I said. "I really have nothing."

She looked me straight in the eye and then looked away. "Fine," she said. "Just don't get me food. I'm dieting."

"You're what?"

"Dieting."

"What?"

"Trying to lose weight."

I snorted. "What for?"

"Just because," she shrugged. "I want to be healthy."

I looked back at my book, thinking about what she said. "Loosing weight doesn't necessarily equate to being healthy."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Besides, you don't need to lose weight."

She started to grin.

And almost immediately I realized that she was hoping for me to say something like this. So I rolled my eyes, but then my heart did something strange when she leaned forward and kissed my cheek.

How on earth had I changed so much to allow some girl to make me feel this way?

The next day, Alec came to pick me up and we drove to the mall together.

The mall was quite an interesting place. In a sense, it was kind of like a market

except that it had multiple floors and it was a little more organized.

I didn't really like the malls here though, but that was because I didn't like crowds, and these malls were always crowded.

Today, we weren't at the usual mall that May and I went to. Instead, we were at an even larger mall but this was a good thing. There was more selection, which meant I was probably more likely to find something good for May.

We weren't searching for that long when we came across a strange shop that intrigued me.

In fact, it intrigued me to a point that I froze in my tracks and was struck with awe by a strange shop.

There were two windows on both sides of the entrance and both had a large photograph of two different women, one with radiant blonde hair that tumbled down their shoulders and the other with luscious black hair that covered half her face.

Despite being a man, it was their hair that attracted me first. These photographs made them look like they had silky, perfect locks that framed their faces elegantly.

However, my eyes then moved to their faces... both of which had quite the sensual expressions on them. Lips parted, eyes half closed...

They *were* beautiful, I must admit. But I had to also admit that they were a little too skinny for my liking.

And then I realized they were wearing what May referred to as underwear.

My head tilted slightly as I examined their clothing, or lack there of.

I had spotted similar cupped garments that covered the breast of these women in Mays closet before. I never quite understood the use of such a piece of clothing.

What benefit would such a strange thing give to a woman's breasts? Was it for the purpose of looking attractive?

But how was covering a part of the body that made women who they were considered beautiful?

It baffled me completely.

Alec, who hadn't initially realized I stopped walking, turned and returned to me with a chuckle, "buddy... staring at those pictures is kind of awkward."

I looked at him, "then why in the name of Ra would someone hang such large pictures if not for us to look?"

"Touché," Alec said, though I had no idea what that meant.

"Is this a woman's underwear store?"

Alec snorted, "oh yes."

"But why are they so... lacy?" I asked, "May's look nothing like this."

Alec looked at me in shock, "no way. There's absolutely no way you've gotten to second base with May."

"Second base?"

"Have you... slept with her?"

This was the most personal question Alec had ever asked me. "No," I said, firmly, "God no."

He looked at me suspiciously. "Then how do you know how her underwear looks like?"

"It's not like she hides them so effectively. Why? Are they supposed to be secret?"

"Yeah." Alec said, "in fact, this store is the very famous Victoria's Secret. And girls love this place."

"Who's Victoria?"

Alec winked at me, though I was completely confused, "you'll find out... and I

think I know what you should get for May for her birthday."

So that was that.

We went into the strange, dark, underwear store filled with overly excited employees who seemed more than willing to give us a hand in finding overly lacy, colourful, overpriced pieces of clothing.

At first, I wasn't particularly keen on purchasing this for May. I didn't see the value in it, nor did I like how pricy it was. But to prove to me that May would like it, Alec even called Aurora.

Aurora had arrived at the store in literally, five minutes. She *must* have been at the mall already. There was no way she could have gotten here so fast from anywhere else.

So I complained to her as well.

Aurora held her hand up, silencing me.

If we were back at home, I would have had her executed for such disrespect. But I couldn't deny that she was a frightening woman.

"Listen, May will be extremely flattered if you get her this."

"But it's a useless gift."

"No," she said, firmly. "It's not. It's *Victoria's Secret*. All girls love stuff from here."

"But—"

"Atem, be honest, do you think May would look sexy in this?"

I hesitated, not liking that she was asking me such a strange question. "Well..."

"If you two were having a little fun, and she was wearing this, would you find her sexy?"

"I don't understand how there could be anything more 'sexy' than woman's *naked* body," I answered.

Aurora considered that, realizing the truth in what I said. But she still seemed to want to argue *for* these strange garments. "Listen, girls like May are conscious about their bodies. And when their boyfriend buys them something like this, it makes them happy because it means them think that their man thinks they'll look good in it. Which I'm sure you think. It'll just make it easy for her to open up to you, you know?"

Okay. I can see why that would be true. And the point of all of this was to make May happy. So if this would make May happy, no matter how strange the reason, maybe it would be a good gift.

However, I wanted to clear something up. "But I'm not trying to get her to sleep with me."

"Yeah right," her and Alec both said together.

I was thoroughly shocked by their reaction. I was being completely honest. I had no intention of *convincing* May to have sex with me.

Part of the reason was because I had never been someone's first before. And because of that, I didn't understand what it would take for her to be 'ready.' The last thing I needed was for us to have sex and for her to realize she was not ready and then be upset about it later on.

That would be a little bit too much of a harsh blow to my ego.

Aurora chuckled, probably at the shock on my face. But she pushed that aside and continued, "okay, go ahead. Pick something you think would look good on her."

I rolled my eyes and turned around, feeling defeated for the second time today. However, when I turned around, something caught my eye.

And the second I saw it... I knew exactly what I was going to get May.

Unfortunately, it was not exactly what Aurora and Alec had in mind... but it was from this Victoria's Secret shop and I managed to convince them that this was enough.

And I knew May would love it.

After purchasing the gift, Uncle Ethan called me, requesting for some help with more translating.

I went with the gift in hand.

Uncle Ethan wasn't in his office when I arrived. He warned me of that, so I didn't mind and got straight to work. And after a couple hours of working, I finished what he wanted me to do and headed home.

Despite my memory being remarkable, I surprisingly realized at about ten in the evening that I had forgotten the gift in Uncle Ethan's office. I was only reminded of it when May asked me yet again what I had gotten her.

I quickly got up and left the apartment, telling her that I had to go get it.

Thankfully, Uncle Ethan had given me the key to his office so when I got there, I walked right in and saw the Victoria's Secret bag sitting on his desk.

It was completely obvious that he had rummaged through it. And after a moment of wondering why he was being so disrespectful, I realized *exactly* why an uncle and father figure to May would worry at the sight of such a bag.

Thankfully, there was not anything particularly crazy in that bag so he was probably relieved when he looked inside.

After adjusting the pink tissue paper and picking up the bag, however, something on Uncle Ethan's very messy desk caught my eye.

It was a brown folder.

On the brown folder was, in big, thick, black letters, my brothers' name: Khamenatem.

Of course, I knew that Uncle Ethan's research had much to do with Khamenatem. I knew this since he had access to Khamenatem's poem. The first poem he ever asked me to translate a year ago to prove that I was truly a Pharaoh.

But I never asked for any more details of his research.

Though I tried not to think about it... part of the reason I did not want to know anything about Uncle Ethan's research was because I did not want to admit that my brother was dead.

Of course, he was. I was thousands of years in the future and he must have died of old age at the very least.

I did wonder some times what may have happened to him. Had he gotten married? Maybe had children? He deserved that. He deserved to be happy. He was a good, young man.

However, I sent him away a year before I was cursed because he was being a nuisance to me. Like my mother, he always complained about my actions. I had grown tired of his complaints and sent him north to Lower Egypt, assigning him the role of governing Memphis. So now it had been two years since I last saw him.

He was infuriated with my decision, but we still wrote letters to each other. And since he was a poet, I often enjoyed reading his letters. He was very good with his words.

I sighed and touched the folder.

Part of me wanted to look inside.

Another part of me urged me to leave it be and go home.

Did I really want to know what happened to him?

After a couple moments of contemplation, the curious side of me proved victorious and I sat in Uncle Ethan's chair and flipped the folder open.

I stared at the collection of photographs, all of which were walls that belonged to the tomb that Khamenatem was probably buried in.

They were filled with his poetry that Khamenatem himself had written, and skimming through it all made me smile.

I was familiar with all of it.

He had recited them all to me at one point or another.

But when I finished the fourth poem and flipped the page, I was surprised by another photograph.

And as I examined it, I felt my heart sink to the floor.

Chapter 30 - [Beauty and the Pretty Bad Birthday]

Hey guys!!

Sorry it's a day late! Got a little busy with some nonsense! HAHA! As always, let me know what you think and I really hope you enjoy!!!

Love,

Luckycharms! <3



I sat in the living room waiting patiently. Atem sure was late. He had ran off to apparently "get" my gift, and he still hadn't returned. It was now ten minutes past twelve on May third. It was my birthday.

And I was alone in my apartment.

Well, not really *alone*, since Neferkiti was here.

Aurora had called me and wished me, so had Alec. And Uncle Ethan and my brother too! Yet Atem, the one who lived with me, still hadn't wished me.

I rolled my eyes.

What could possibly be taking him so long? At this point, all I could think of was that he was probably late because he was planning something. That had to be it. And it was half past twelve when I heard the door click.

When he walked in, I rushed to the door with a huge grin on my face. I was expecting a "Happy Birthday" and a hug and a kiss too.

But my grin faded almost instantly after I saw his face.

He was staring at me... and he looked upset.

But it wasn't the usual look of annoyance he had on his face. In fact, he didn't look angry at all.

He looked upset.

Genuinely upset.

"What's wrong?" I asked, walking over to him.

He didn't say anything to me. He had a big bag in his hand, which he suddenly dropped on the floor, and then he stepped forward.

I was a little surprised when he hugged me tightly. Again, it wasn't a happy hug, I could just feel it. His face was nuzzled against my neck and I could both hear and feel his short, quick breaths.

Something was definitely wrong.

So I hugged him back, "what's wrong, 'Tem?"

And then I felt wetness on my neck.

He was... crying?

I tried to pull away so I could see his face, but he wouldn't let me. "Atem?"

He was definitely crying.

I only felt the tears for a moment, as if he cried only a couple tears, but his body was shaking slightly as I hugged him.

"What's wrong Atem?" I asked, rubbing his back, "I can't help you if you don't tell me."

I couldn't imagine what on earth could have made him so upset.

What could have happened?

But as I tried to console him, I felt myself tear up. I was bad at consoling people when they cried. I was one of those people who cried when others did. But obviously, that wouldn't help the situation. So I swallowed back my own tears and tried my best to calm him down.

He stood there, hugging me for a really long time.

And then when he finally pulled away, he picked up the bag he dropped, turned around quickly and went straight to his room, shutting the door.

I tried to go after him, but he wouldn't let me.

He wouldn't even let the poor and upset Neferkiti in.

After that, of course I couldn't sleep.

I had pretty much completely forgotten that it was my birthday.

I was just sitting outside of Atem's room with Neferkiti in my lap, calling his name here and there in the hopes that he'd let me in and tell me what happened.

I mean, how *could* I sleep?

He was crying.

Atem was crying.

Something had upset this guy to the point that he cried... even if it was only a little bit.

And sure, there was nothing wrong with boys crying. I wasn't one of those crazy people who thought that boys should never cry... but *Atem*?

He was the kind of guy who would think that blinking a lot was a weakness.

For *him* to cry?

The thought made my stomach turn in worry.

It was a little bit past three when he finally opened the door. Since I was leaning against said door, I practically fell into his room at his feet.

He looked down at me, his usual nonchalant expression on his face.

I got up quickly, Neferkiti still in my arms. "Are you okay?!"

"I'm fine," he walked past me and into the kitchen.

I scoffed as I followed him. "You made me sit outside your room freaking out for three hours and all you're going to say is 'I'm fine?'" Neferkiti meowed, as if agreeing with me.

He was pouring himself a glass of water. I waited for him to drink it before I continued nagging. "Atem! You are not going anywhere until you tell me what happened!"

He opened his mouth to say something, but then closed it again. He looked away for a moment and when he looked back at me, he had a small smile on his face. "Happy birthday."

I rolled my eyes and stepped forward, jabbing my finger into his chest, "don't try and change the subject!"

He groaned before trying to walk away, but I grabbed his arm.

I was tired and getting frustrated... but I knew I wouldn't be able to sleep until I knew for sure that he was okay.

At that moment, I was about to yell at him and tell him he was an asshole for making me worry and that if he didn't hurry up and tell me then I wasn't going to talk to him.

But before I could say it, he had already let out a defeated sigh. "Your uncle," he started. "He has pictures... of my brother."

I hesitated. "Pictures?" How could Uncle Ethan have pictures of his brother?

Unless...

He meant...

"Pictures of his corpse," Atem said rather bluntly.

Well... that explained everything. Of course Atem would be upset after seeing something like that.

I reached out and touched his arm, "I'm sorry, Atem."

Atem didn't look at me. "There's a massive hole in his skull."

My hand went over my mouth. "Oh my gosh..."

"He was murdered. Just like the rest of them."

I stared in shock. "Are you... sure it was him?"

"Well, no," Atem said. "But the picture was in that folder... so it must have been him."

I didn't know what to say to him. So I just stared, trying to find the right words.

He sighed before walking around the kitchen's island and sitting on the couch. I didn't follow him at first. Instead, I stood there, still trying to figure out what to say.

After thinking for a while but then deciding that I couldn't think of anything in particular that could help him, I followed him to the couch.

When I sat down next to him, he spoke up first. "I always imagined that he would have had a happy life," Atem said. "He was a good person."

I let out a breath, and Neferkiti, who was still with me, walked off of my lap and into Atem's, trying to comfort him as well.

"I sent him away," Atem continued. "He kept annoying me about the way I was treating people, so I sent him north to govern Memphis."

"Oh," I said. "Was he upset with that?"

"Yes," Atem said. "But he got over it... at least... it seemed that way in the letters he would send me."

Oh yeah, I thought to myself as I smiled, they would have had to send letters back then.

"He was very artistic. He was an excellent artist and he also wrote a lot of poetry... and since the capital was switched to Thebes, Memphis was often very quiet and peaceful. He started to like it there because he had more time on his hands to do things he liked."

"It's his poem that you read to us back then when we first met, right?"

He nodded. "It was one of my favourites."

I didn't remember to poem much at all. Back then, I was so confused and focused on trying to figure out what was wrong with Atem that I wasn't even listening to what he was saying.

Now I really wondered what that poem was all about.

Atem stroked her fur and looked like he had clearly calmed down. I guess three hours were enough for him to calm himself down.

But still, he was clearly hurt.

I didn't even want to imagine what it would feel like to find out that my brother was murdered.

And it wasn't just his brother... months ago we found out about his mother as well.

I felt my heart sink.

The only two people who Atem really cared about both died in a horrible way.

"Maybe... it wasn't your brother," I tried. "We should ask Uncle Ethan to be sure... just in case, you know?"

"There's no point trying to raise my hopes. I'm certain that it's him."

I felt my eyes water a little, though I tried my best to hold it back. My crying wouldn't do anything to help the situation. "Well, whatever the case... we should go see Uncle Ethan. I'm sure he'd be able to give you more information."

"I don't know if I want any more information."

"You don't want to know what happened?"

He hesitated.

"Maybe... he could even give you good news?"

"I don't know how he could make this news good."

I decided maybe it was better that I stopped talking. I wasn't helping the situation. In fact, I may have been making it worse.

So instead, I scooted closer to Atem and snuggled up against him, not really knowing how that would help but feeling the urge to do it.

And after a moment of silence, he sighed and put his arm around me.

Neither of us slept at all that night. Atem for obvious reasons, and myself because I felt really bad for Atem and didn't want to sleep.

But as soon as the time came for Uncle Ethan to be in his office, I got ready and dragged him along with me to see him.

I knew Atem didn't want me to try and raise his hopes... but I *did* have some hope. I mean... maybe Uncle Ethan would say something important, something that would make Atem happy.

When we got to Uncle Ethan's office, he greeted me with a happy smile and a hug. "Hey, Birthday girl! What brings you here?"

I smiled. It was so weird... I had forgotten that it was my birthday. "I know this is strange timing but we've got some questions to ask you."

Uncle Ethan looked at me when he pulled away from the hug. "The way you said that doesn't sound good." He then looked at Atem. I'm guessing that he noticed something was off about Atem's expression, because he seemed to have already figured it out.

My uncle sighed before scratching his head and then walking back to his seat behind his desk. "I had a feeling you saw it," he said. "When I saw that you took the gift bag I started to worry."

Atem just sat down in the chair in front of him without saying a word. After a moment of hesitation, I sat down in the other seat.

"You must be here for an explanation, then?"

I nodded, and Atem said nothing. It made me wonder if Atem was mad at Uncle Ethan for not telling him about this. He probably was... at least a little bit. I couldn't blame him though.

"I was going to tell you... I swear. But we were unsure of who he was until just a little while ago," my uncle started. "We found the mummy back in June. It wasn't in his tomb, however we had evidence that it may have been Khamenatem."

"In June?" I asked. That *was* a long time ago.

"Yes," Uncle Ethan said as he pulled a folder out from his drawer. On it was written 'Khamenatem' in big, bold letters. "The process of extracting DNA from the mummy is a long one... not so much because of the science part of it, but more so the paperwork. The Egyptian government is very keen on protecting its mummies, for good reason, of course, so they try to keep us away from damaging them even slightly."

I could imagine why the government wanted to protect their mummies, they were a part of their history after all. The thought of scientists constantly touching the mummies or doing anything to them was a little... violating.

"To be honest, the only reason they even let us take the DNA was because we were able to prove that he wasn't a Pharaoh. If he *was* a Pharaoh, the process would have taken much longer," he sighed. "Anyways, the results came in a little while ago... and we were able to compare the DNA of the mummy we discovered to the DNA of Pharaoh Ahmenmose III—"

Atem straightened up. "My father?" He asked in shock.

My uncle nodded, "yes. We have the DNA of Ahmenmose III. His mummy was found years ago, long before any serious laws for DNA extraction were created."

"You have my father's mummy?" Atem sounded angry now.

"Well," my uncle started, "I don't. The mummy was in display in Cairo for some time but it has now been returned to its tomb. Like I said before, the Egyptian government is doing what it can to respect these people. Thankfully, Ahmenmose III was one of the Pharaoh's who were lucky enough to be returned to his tomb. Tutankhamen is another."

Atem relaxed a little. "Good," he said. "That's where he belongs."

Uncle Ethan nodded his agreement. "So, like I was saying... we were able to compare the DNA and we are one hundred percent certain that it is Khamenatem."

I pouted my lips slightly. I was kind of hoping it wasn't.

Atem leaned back in his seat and sighed silently.

"You saw the pictures... right?"

Atem nodded.

Uncle Ethan opened the folder up on the large desk between us. "I beg your pardon, May, but these photos are a little gruesome."

"I can handle it," I said as I leaned forward and took a look.

They were regular eight-by-eleven pages of paper with one big photograph on each.

The first was a picture of the classic mummy. Dried up, shriveled, a little bit of hair left on his head, eyes closed and arms crossed over his chest.

However, you could definitely see what Atem was talking about... the hole in the skull.

Uncle Ethan then showed us the next picture, "this is a close up of the injury that Khamenatem has."

It was a large hole in the top of the skull, near the forehead. A clean hole that went through the top and probably came out from the back too.

Atem was looking at it for a moment, before leaning back into his chair and looking away.

"My team has been looking into this injury very deeply... we've had contact with multiple scientists and historians and we've come to a steady conclusion—" he paused as he pulled out another paper.

On this other paper was a drawing of a weapon.

Atem turned around and looked back at the weapon.

It was a kind of odd looking, short sword.

"We have these very intelligent researchers and physicists who have worked together alongside us and we were able to extrapolate *a lot* from this wound—"

"Like the weapon that was used?" Atem asked, looking skeptical.

"Exactly," Uncle Ethan added. "And aside from the weapon, we could also figure out the position he was in when he was killed... and that alone says a lot."

"How on earth could you tell that?"

"You see," Uncle Ethan started, clearly getting a little excited despite the situation. "Very intelligent physicists can look at the injury and calculate the force that was used to hit this young man. And these kind of calculations can also be done to see the position he was in when he was hit and whether the executioner was standing behind or in front of him... and much more."

I saw Atem's eye twitch.

"So?" I asked Uncle Ethan. "What does all that mean? You have the weapon, you know the position... why is that important?"

Uncle Ethan was clearly holding in his excitement. He clearly understood that we were not the people to act excited in front of... after all, this was Atem's brother he was talking about.

But it was obvious that Uncle Ethan had done a lot of work to find out what he knows. He had a reason to be excited.

"Khamenatem's mummy has changed history as we know it."

I raised an eyebrow.

Uncle Ethan pushed the picture of the axe to Atem, "can you identify this weapon."

Atem was leaning to his right with his elbow on the arm of the chair and his chin in his hand. He looked down at the picture and then back up at Uncle Ethan. "I can."

Uncle Ethan nodded, urging him to continue.

"It's the typical sword of the People of the Sea," he said. He used his free hand to trace over the curve of the triangular knife part of the sword. "Their swords

always looked like elongated arrow heads."

Uncle Ethan nodded.

And then Atem hesitated. He looked at Uncle Ethan with narrowed eyes. "One of the People of the Sea killed my brother?"

I probably had a look of complete confusion on my face.

I knew a little bit about the sea people... but not much. All I really knew was that they would invade Egypt here and there and cause lots of problems.

"That's what we believe," Uncle Ethan said. "We believe that your brother was captured by the Sea People and then executed. Evidence shows that he was probably on his knees but judging by the blow itself... he probably took it like a hero."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean that he was brave. He didn't falter or jerk or anything like that."

Atem let out a breath.

Uncle Ethan looked at him. "And if it makes you feel better, Atem... he wouldn't have felt much pain. It would have been over in an instant."

Atem let out another breath. "So how does this change history?"

Uncle Ethan put the photos back in the folder, "because all this time we thought that the Romans were the ones who invaded, attacked and brought down Egypt."

I narrowed my eyes... but then realized what he meant.

"Since his body is the only mummified body of an important figure we have from the time of the invasion... the evidence from the body clearly points to it actually being the *Sea People* who attacked and invaded Egypt."

"Oh... man..."

"But since the Romans eventually got control, there must have been a point where the Romans came in and got rid of the Sea People," Uncle Ethan

continued.

Atem thought about that for a moment. "That makes more sense... to be honest," Atem said. "The People of the Sea seem more likely to cause such damage than the Romans."

"That's exactly what we were thinking as well. And something that I can add is that... getting rid of you and causing the chaos that would have ensued due to an absent Pharaoh would have been exactly what the Sea People would have needed for a successful invasion."

Atem nodded.

"That also means that it is entire possible for the Sea People to have had something to do with your curse."

It was entirely obvious that Uncle Ethan was trying to make this conversation a little bit more worthwhile for Atem. At the very least... maybe to distract him from the images of his brother.

Atem nodded his head some more, but then sighed. After a moment of staying quiet, he spoke up.

"There has got to be a way to go back," he said, more to himself than to anyone in particular. "Those people need to pay for what they did."

Uncle Ethan leaned back in his seat. "It was vicious," Uncle Ethan said.

He said something else too but I didn't really hear it.

All I could really hear was Atem basically saying that he wanted to go back.

I hated to admit it but I felt selfish for being upset that he said that... I mean, Atem just found out that his brother was stabbed in the head with a sword. Why would I even think of thinking about myself?

But I couldn't help it.

It was obvious that *if* there was a way for Atem to return... thousands of lives would be saved. His mother would be alive and so would his brother. He could

be a hero.

And for all I knew... maybe Atem was constantly thinking about this. Constantly thinking about how his actions lead to the death of all those people, and his mother, and now his brother too. It might be eating him up from the inside.

Yet, here I was, upset that Atem wanted to go back because that would mean leaving *me*.

I was a horrible person.

Shortly after this, Uncle Ethan apologized to Atem for not telling him sooner, and then Atem and I returned home.

When we got home, I wandered around the house doing random things including cleaning the kitchen and even trying to get some more studying done. I had one exam left before my first year of university was over and I felt ready for it... but I still chose to continue studying. Probably trying to take my mind off of what had gone on today. And probably trying to take my mind off of that deep worry I felt inside me. Worry that was caused by the fact that Atem may leave me and choose to go home if he had the option.

Of course, I had obviously pretty much forgotten it was my birthday.

I was only reminded when my mother gave me a call to wish me.

Almost immediately after talking to her, Atem walked into my room.

When I looked up at him, he blinked a couple times, sighed and then walked over to me. When he reached me, he sat down next to me on my bed. "I'm sorry," he said without looking at me.

"For what?" I asked, closing my textbook. I wasn't going to absorb anything else anyways.

"For ruining your birthday."

I smiled at him, "you didn't ruin my birthday."

I really did believe that.

Sure, I was pretty upset... but I wasn't going to blame Atem for that. It's not his fault he found out that his brother was murdered. I would be even worse of a person than I already was if I blamed him.

"That's two years in a row," he started. "Two birthdays I've ruined."

Now I chuckled. "Well, last year, yeah," I said as I remembered the sword at my throat and the hassle of convincing him that I was a princess. "That birthday you kinda ruined. But this years you didn't."

He leaned back on the bed, holding himself up with his hands. "It's been a full year since I arrived here."

"And you've changed a lot."

Atem hesitated. "I have."

I smiled some more, remembering what felt like so long ago. "You were such a jerk back then."

"And I'm not anymore?"

"Well, not *that* bad."

He let out a short laugh.

"You called me ugly, and smelly," I said. "And I think you called me fat too."

I could see the slight look of regret on his face. "I apologized for that... did I not? I didn't mean it."

I laughed.

His face suddenly lit up as he seemed like he remembered something. "Hold on," he said. "I still haven't given you your present."

I started to smile again.

I loved presents.

He got up and left the room. When he returned I felt my cheeks heat up.

In his hands was a Victoria's Secret bag.

My jaw practically dropped.

"What..."

He sat down in front of me again, placing the bag in my lap.

Nervousness and embarrassment rushed through me. *Lingerie?* I thought. *He got me lingerie?!*

Would I have to try it on in front of him?

Oh my gosh.

I swallowed back nervousness and looked at him.

He looked eager for me to open it. "Well?"

I smiled awkwardly before digging into the bag. Then I immediately felt soft fabric... but something felt off.

When I pulled it all out of the bag, I let out a laugh.

"Really?" I asked. "You went to *Victoria's Secret*... like, the worlds most famous lingerie store and you got me *pajamas*?"

He suddenly looked a little worried. "You don't like it?"

I let out a chuckle and gave him a smile. And then I leaned forward and kissed his lips.

"I *love* it," I said when I pulled away.

I actually did.

The top was this soft, and red with long sleeves and though it had a deep neck, it looked very comfortable. And the bottoms were also super soft and black with these adorable polar bears on them. There was even an eye mask.

They were *super* cute.

And there was something really charming about the fact that he went to a lingerie shop and got me pajamas.

"Your old ones are torn and ugly," he said bluntly. "You needed a new set."

I chuckled. That was true. "I'm going to go try them on," I said as I stood up.

But right when I stood up, I heard the doorbell ring.

It was ringing over and over and over and over again and when I ran to answer it, I was surprised by Ro, Alec, Blake and a giant bottle of vodka.

"Happy Birthday!" They all shouted together.

And then Ro proceeded to yell at Atem for not following instructions and texting her when we were ready.

I laughed.

And suddenly, my birthday wasn't so bad anymore. I mean, I was celebrating it with the people I love and... Atem was still here.

He was here at this moment, with me.

I guess that was all that mattered rightnow.

Chapter 31 - [Beauty and Julian the Jerk]

HELLO EVERYONE!!

I hope you all have been having a very wonderful holiday season!! =D I just wanted to let you all know that the next chapter will be up within the next couple hours as a late Christmas gift for you all! HAHA!! Just have to finish it up!

Thanks as always for reading! And please don't forget to vote and comment!

Happy Holidays!! And have a fantastic New Year!

Love,

Luckycharms!



On my birthday, my mother had made it clear that she wanted to spend some time with me and also get to know Atem. We had arranged for a day the following week to meet up and all I could say was Atem didn't seem too pleased with the thought.

"The last time I spoke with your family, it ended very badly," he said as he waited for me to put on my shoes.

"That's because you were talking to my grandfather. Things always go badly when you're talking to my grandfather."

Atem still didn't look very excited.

The plan was to meet my mother at a coffee shop near my apartment, so Atem and I both made our way to the shop. Thankfully, it was a short distance away.

When we got there, my mother was already sitting in a booth, cellphone in her hands.

I walked over to her with a smile. "Hey mom," I said as we approached her.

My mother looked up from her phone with a smile. "Hey, sweetheart," she said before giving Atem a smile as well.

Atem nodded his head at her before we both sat down in the seat in front of her.

To be completely honest, I *did* expect this whole thing to be rather awkward. I mean, my mom was getting a chance to *really* talk to Atem, who was my boyfriend.

And to top it all off, Atem was right when he said that the last time she saw us, things didn't go so well.

However, it was pretty great.

It was clear that my mom also knew it was going to be awkward, so she definitely seemed to be trying to avoid any awkward topics to help all three of us out.

Atem was his usual self, pretty nonchalant and lacking any kind of emotion in his tone.

Luckily for me, my mother was like that as well. So she was not at all offended by his demeanor.

And after a couple hours, my mother left early after giving me a birthday gift. Then, Atem and I left feeling completely satisfied.

It worked out fabulously.

By the end, my mother had made it clear that she definitely approved of Atem. She even complimented the confidence in his voice and the tone of authority he always let out... the same tone that often pissed me off.

But anyways... it kind of felt nice to know that my mother approved of him.

And even Atem seemed a little bit pleased.

So as we walked home, I had a smile on my face.

And it was on this walk home that we ran into Julian. I wasn't too surprised when we spotted him, since we seem to randomly see him around all the time.

But today... something was off.

He was practically marching towards us, hair a mess, a look of exhaustion in his eyes.

"Hey, Julian! How are..." I started. My voice began to trail off when it kind of looked like he was going to walk right into me.

Atem, who clearly noticed this as well, stepped a little bit in front of me, making Julian stop walking. He was standing only an inch away from Atem.

I started to worry... there was definitely something off.

"Move," Julian practically hissed.

My eyebrows rose because there was something strange going on with his voice. It didn't sound like Julian.

It *did* sound like someone I knew, but not Julian.

He started to try and push past Atem, but Atem held him back.

"Julian, what on earth—"

"I knew I should have gotten rid of you," he surprised me by saying. "You have done nothing but ruin all that I have worked for."

My eyebrows rose. "What?"

"What is wrong with you?" Atem asked, giving him a good push so that he had taken a couple steps back.

People who were walking down the streets were giving us nervous looks, which made me feel more nervous than I already was.

What was going on?

"What is going through your head, girl?" he asked, glaring with his hands balled up into fists. "Have you no sense? To aid a man like this?"

"Julian, what are you talking about?"

"He ordered the murders of innocent people!"

Julian literally had this look of crazy in eyes. They were wide and angry and totally out of it.

"I thought the woman with interest in learning more about him would be the only problem... yet I knew I should have killed her entire family. Should have killed you."

Now my eyes widened.

But before I could even say anything, Atem had landed a good punch onto Julian's face.

However, Julian looked back at me, eyes still angry.

And suddenly, a flash of red passed through his eyes and both Atem and I knew exactly what was going on.

Atem grabbed Julian by the collar while I stood there frozen. "*You!*" Atem hissed. "You aren't dead?"

Julian... or, the wizard, ignored him, still looking at me. "I will end you like I did your aunt."

My heart sank to the ground.

This was crazy.

I was having one of those moments where everything started to fade out... where everything started to seem like a dream. I mean, this *had* to be a dream, right?

This guy, who may have been the wizard, was claiming to have killed my aunty.

That was impossible.

She was killed by a drunk driver.

He started to smirk. "Have you not figured it out yet?" he asked. "You are as stupid as you look. I killed her. I killed your aunt. Taking possession of a weak human spirit is a simple matter and that's what I did. I possessed a drunk man and got him to drive his vehicle right into your aunts. I killed her. And I—"

Atem punched him again, this time it was hard enough to knock him to the ground.

A small crowd had suddenly gathered, some random man trying to grab Atem and calm him down.

But at this point, I had already turned around and started to run.

I heard Atem call my name, but I kept running as fast as I could.

Atem found me pretty quickly, only about an hour had passed since I ran off. I had made my way to the Oakville Park, which I liked so much and I was sitting at one of the benches at the cliff top trying not to cry.

When he found me, he sat down next to me immediately, sounding kind of out of breath. "Do you know how long it took me to find you?" Atem asked, clearly angry. "Why didn't you pick up your phone?"

I looked down at my hands, which were in my lap and started using my fingernails to scrape off my nail polish.

I could tell that Atem was staring at me. My peripheral vision reached pretty far.

"My punch made him lose consciousness for a moment," Atem said. "But

when he woke up, he was completely out of it. The wizard must have left his body..."

I closed my eyes for a moment before opening them again. "Do you think he was being serious?"

Atem looked at me.

"About my aunt?" I asked. "Did he actually... kill my aunt?"

Atem watched me for a moment before he sighed. "My honest answer is yes... I do believe that he would have done such a thing. I find no reason for him to lie about that. Unless of course, it's an attempt to get you to hate me."

"Hate *you*?"

"If he really killed her... it was to prevent me from getting any help. It's my fault."

I rolled my eyes, let out a huff and looked away. "Don't be an idiot," I said. "It's not your fault."

Again, Atem looked at me but didn't say anything.

This changed *everything*.

But at the same time, it changed *nothing*.

I was so upset but I didn't know what to do about it. Aunt Maya was still dead. She was still gone. The only difference now was that someone intentionally killed her. It wasn't an accident.

And the more and more I thought about it, the angrier I got.

"Why'd you run away like that?" Atem suddenly asked.

I turned and looked at him.

"You should not run away from your problems. You should have given him a good slap across the face. That would have been satisfying for you."

I let out a small laugh. Though I had *never* slapped someone across the face before, when I thought about it I realized Atem was right.

If I had slapped that guy across the face, I would have probably felt a lot better.

So I sighed. "I guess you're right."

"I knew there was something off about that man," Atem said.

"Julian?"

He nodded.

I guess he was right... Julian did kinda give me the creeps. "But why... why would he tell me that he wanted to date me and stuff like that?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Atem asked, "the wizards primary goal is to ruin me..." his voice trailed off as he realized something.

"What? What's wrong?"

"That time... a year ago. He *was* intentionally attacking you."

Well yeah, I knew that much. He tried to choke me to death.

"And it must have been because you're helping me... he wanted to get rid of you because you were helping him."

Okay. That made sense. He mentioned something about that today too. "But I thought you stabbed him... then he turned into sand! Then he never bothered us for so long..."

He shrugged now. "I don't understand how his magic works. My best guess is that it takes him too much power to be here. I'm sure he is not staying here with me... he must be coming and going."

That made sense too.

"So maybe when I attacked him, he was too weak to attack back. And all that time he was gone, he was just recovering."

"But he's possessing bodies now."

"Probably because it takes less work for him to possess a body then it does to bring his own body here. He did say that it was easy to take control of a weak spirit."

I placed a hand over my head.

Though I was feeling kind of faint, I was doing everything I could to push a certain thought out of my head.

The wizard was back.

Which meant that Atem *could* possibly be taken away from me.

But no.

I wasn't going to think about that.

But still... the wizard *was* back after all. I definitely wasn't seeing things I that night before I fell.

And what else could that mean?

Was he going to try and hurt Atem and I? Was Atem going to be safe?

I guess I kinda hoped that Atem was right... that the wizard was limited in power when he came to my world. That made me feel a little better.

But still...

When Atem and I got home that evening, we didn't say much to each other.

Atem went to his room to read and I stayed in mine.

I wasn't actually reading though. There was too much going on in my mind for me to be reading.

But suddenly, I had this crazy idea.

For some reason, I thought this would solve everything. Though when you

thought about it, it wouldn't solve anything. However, at the time I thought it was a brilliant idea.

I walked into Atem's room with a smile on my face.

When he looked at me, my smile grew.

"Let's go on a trip."

Chapter 32 - [Beauty and the Old Lady]

Hello again!!

YAY FOR TWO UPLOADS IN A DAY!!! And here's more good news!! I will have yet ANOTHER upload within the next couple days!!! =D!!

He he!! See you soon! And enjoy the upload!!

Happy holidays again!!

Love,

Luckycharms! <3



Of course, Atem had no idea what a road trip was. The plan was super sudden, and I had no intention of going anywhere far.

After all, Atem didn't have a passport, obviously.

There was a huge city two cities to the right of ours that apparently had glorious parks, great things to do, and this massive, awesome museum. So I thought going there would be a fantastic idea.

I asked Ro if she wanted to come with us, since the more the merrier. Unfortunately, she was going to be busy with her mom for the next couple days. And Alec wasn't able to get days off from work.

So it was just Atem and I.

And Neferkiti.

I didn't want to leave her behind all alone, and I was pretty sure Atem wouldn't want that as well.

It was only a three or four day trip. I had booked us a cheap, average hotel which allowed pets since I couldn't afford anything fancy.

As we pulled out of my apartment's parking garage, Atem kept asking me *why* we were doing this.

"I dunno," I answered. "It's summer and I just want to do something different."

I had never gone on a trip on my own before. Well, I wasn't exactly on my own but you know what I meant.

The last trip I went on was with my parents a couple years ago. And that was out of the country.

I used my GPS to guide us, though Atem found the voice of the woman to be super annoying. I couldn't do anything about that though. I wasn't particularly direction smart. And reading a map was definitely not my forte.

We drove and drove and drove and drove and took a break at a café, but then drove and drove some more.

It wasn't so bad.

Atem really seemed to like it when we drove far. He liked looking out the window and staring at the scenery and asking questions.

Neferkiti wasn't too fond of the long trip. However, she was a good sport and slept for most of the trip.

And the Disney songs that were playing in the stereo of the car distracted me and kept me occupied.

After about eight hours of driving, we had finally arrived at the small hotel.

When we walked in with Neferkiti and our luggage and Atem made a huff. "*This* is it?"

Neferkiti jumped out of my arms, pleased to finally be able to stretch her legs. "Yeah, it's the best one I could afford."

It was a fairly small room with only one king sized bed. It had a washroom, a big table, a T.V. and a vanity and that was about it.

"It's hideous," Atem said as he put the suitcase aside.

"It's not that bad!" I said as I jumped onto the bed. Thankfully, the bed seemed kind of comfy.

"Why is there only one bed?" Atem asked.

"Cause a two bedroom is much more expensive," I said, truthfully. "Beside, this bed is huge, the both of us can fit!"

Though Atem and I had made a couple references about sleeping next to each other over the past couple months, we had never actually done so.

So this would definitely be the first time. Not including that one time where we were reading together, of course. And the time he fell asleep on my lap.

Atem let out a huff again. "Well... I suppose it's fine," he said as he walked over to the window and peeked out. We were on the fifth floor of the seven floor building, so I'm sure the view was decent.

And after settling in, Atem and I went out to check out the place.

I was pretty much certain that taking this trip was a great idea. We first went out to eat and then we headed out to check out one of the amazing garden parks that this city had.

Atem seemed to be enjoying himself too.

He had obviously never left Oakville outside of the visit to my grandfather's house. And this change of scenery was probably good for him too.

I definitely needed it.

This entire thing definitely did seem to make me feel a lot better about everything that had happen. Julian and the wizard had almost completely slipped my mind. And I was sure that I would remain distracted for the rest of the trip too. So this was good.

When we went home that night, I changed into the pajamas he bought me (pretty much the only pajamas I wear these days) and then we read a new book I bought at a gas station we passed on the way here.

It was strange how nice this all ways. We weren't doing anything crazy. We were just reading a book underneath a thick cozy blanket with Neferkiti sleeping in between us. But it was nice and fun.

We didn't finish the book because it ended up being pretty boring. So when I got tired, I put the book aside and pulled the covers over me.

Atem was on his side with one arm under his head and the other petting the sleeping Neferkiti who, since I got her a year ago, almost always slept with him.

"Is this how you two always go to bed?" I asked. Normally, if I ever peeked into his room, she was snuggled up against his back.

Atem smirked. "Cat's like me."

"Clearly," I said, "I never understood why she liked you more than me."

"I don't think that's it," Atem said. "In Egypt, cat's represent motherhood and love and protection. I think Neferkiti stays with me because she feels the need to protect me."

"Protect *you*?" I let out a laugh.

Atem looked at me with a raised eyebrow. "I don't mean to *physically* protect me. I mean to ease my tensions. I feel that she seemed to understand the discomfort I originally felt when I first got here," he said. "So she would stay with me to provide me with some comfort. As a mother would do for her babies. Besides, she was really the only thing here that I could relate too."

Okay. I guess I understood that. "Did you have a cat in Egypt?"

He gave me an annoyed look. "We do not *keep* cats in Egypt. So no, I did not *have* one. There were, however, many cats that lived on the grounds of the palace. There were two in particular who were my favourites."

"What were their names?"

"Kekewey, a very dark, almost black, clumsy male. And Reri, a very fat, brown female."

I chuckled.

"Neferkiti is by far the most graceful of the three cats who have been my companions."

I laughed. I thought it was kinda cute that he called them his companions.

He smiled.

And then he moved forward a little and surprised me with a kiss on my forehead.

I felt my cheeks warm up. "What was that for?"

He smiled some more and then went back to petting Neferkiti. "Goodnight."

The next day was a lot of fun too. We ended up going to that amazing museum and it *was* pretty amazing! Thankfully, there were no violated mummies or anything like that in this museum. So Atem didn't have to go through any sort of traumatic experiences.

After that, we went and watched a movie that was pretty good. Then we went out for dinner.

It was pretty late by the time we had finished our day of exploring and having fun. It was dark out and the lamps that were lined across the sidewalk lighted the streets up.

I was holding Atem's hand because I wanted to. Also because I chose to wear slightly heeled boots and my feet were hurting now. He had a strong hold of my hand so I was pretty sure that I wouldn't fall.

I was blabbering on about how much I liked the movie as we walked down the

street, only to be interrupted by the sight of a smiling lady.

The lady was walking towards us with a big smile on her face. She looked old and totally normal. Like a normal grandma.

I didn't know why she was smiling at us, but Atem noticed it too. "Why is she looking at us?" Atem asked in a whisper.

I shrugged.

She was a regular looking old lady, wearing a blue, calf length dress with a shawl over her shoulders to protect her from the chill of the night. Her hair was white and clipped back into a half ponytail and she had wrinkles on her face. She also had a brown purse over her shoulder.

When she reached us, she let out a small laugh. "You're not from here?" She asked. Her voice was kind and friendly.

I chuckled, "no, we're from Oakville."

Her eyes went to Atem, "not you. Your spirit is not from here."

I hesitated.

Wait, what?

"Your spirit seems old. Ancient, actually?"

Atem raised an eyebrow. "What?"

"You don't belong here, do you?"

She seemed friendly and not like she was trying to be creepy or mean or anything. But still, my heart started to sink.

"Who are you?" Atem asked.

She smiled, "just an old lady who sees more than just the outside of a person."

"A sorceress?" Atem asked quickly.

She smiled, "I guess." She said, "You look like a lovely young man. But I sense negativity when I wonder why your ancient soul is here. Why is that?"

"I was cursed," Atem said as he stepped forward.

I stood back, not really understanding what was going on. Was this real? Did she really see something?

Was she really a sorceress?

I mean, I knew there were fortune tellers and stuff that make you pay to get your future told... but I never really believed those people were actually being serious.

Was she actually one of them?

"Cursed?" The woman asked, "how sad."

"Can you see anything else?" Atem asked.

"Well, what exactly do you hope for me to see?" She asked.

"Will I have the chance to go home?" Atem said. "Do you know if there will be such an opportunity?"

I let out a breath.

The woman looked at me. I mean, if she could sense spirits, she probably could sense that I was suddenly really upset.

I travel for eight hours to get away from this nonsense only to find myself in more nonsense.

"Well," the woman started. "I *do* see a return to warmth and heat and chaos quite soon. But the little miss is not pleased."

My breathing hastened, and once again I turned around and rushed off.

She sensed his return to warmth and chaos? And me being unhappy?

That meant he *was* going to go home... didn't it?

I rushed back to the hotel on my own, totally angry and upset at the old lady even though she didn't really do much.

Neferkiti met me at the door, probably sensing that I was upset. She started to rub herself against me as I sat on the bed and acted like a little brat.

The thoughts of me being selfish started to flash through my mind again. I was being selfish. And bratty.

But I couldn't help it.

What was worse was that it totally seemed like Atem *wanted* to go home. Did he actually want to leave me and go home? Did he not care about me at all?

Was it wrong for me to be upset?

Atem joined me in the room shortly after, "May—"

"Don't talk to me," I said. I said it pretty softly but I'm sure he heard.

"Why are you getting mad—"

I turned my head and glared at him. "Because you clearly want to leave me!"

He hesitated.

"You're not even *trying* to hide that fact!"

"That's not it—"

"Whatever," I crossed my arms and looked away, acting like a brat.

"You don't understand—"

"Just leave me alone—"

"May, I *don't* belong here!" He yelled, startling me.

I looked at him.

"Thanks to my actions, my mother burned to death in a temple, my brother was

murdered by a sword being stabbed through his skull, thousands of Egyptians were tortured and killed and now your aunt is dead because of me too!" He said, loudly. "And you don't even know how serious Uncle Ethan's discovery of the invaders being the People of the Sea is! Those people were *ruthless*. My people must have suffered greatly."

I took a shaky breath.

"If I go back, I might be able to stop all of that from happening. This *isn't* about you, May. It is much bigger than that."

I bit my lip.

"I don't deserve any of this May. I don't deserve any of this happiness," he said. "I've said it before and I still believe that."

"Well that's not fair!" I started to yell, feeling the tears come out. "Sure, maybe you don't deserve anything... but if you wanna go by that logic, then what did *I* do to deserve this?" I asked, making Atem's face soften a little. "What did I do? What did I do to deserve having to fall in love with you and then have you taken away from me?"

Atem let out a breath and stepped forward. But he stopped for a moment.

I was crying now, wiping my snot with my sleeve and trying not to let out one of those awkward hiccups.

He took another step forward and then sat down next to me. After another moment of hesitation, he reached out and pulled me into a hug.

"May... you don't understand," Atem started.

I started to try and push him away.

"Listen," he said, fighting me back. "I do not *want* to leave. It's just that I feel that I *must*."

"That doesn't help," I argued.

Despite the situation, he let out a laugh. "Stop acting like a child."

"You stop acting like an ass-hole jerk!"

He laughed again.

"Don't laugh at me!" I yelled. "It's not funny!"

He bent forward and kissed me.

I was mad at him... really mad at him. But I had to admit, the kiss made me feel better.

When he pulled away, he sighed. "May... I don't *want* to leave. But if I have to—"

"Shut up," I surprised myself by saying. "That doesn't make me feel better."

He looked at me.

We were silent for a moment, until I let out a whisper. "I don't want you to go."

"Then come with me," he said.

I hesitated. *Go with him?*

And then he let out a sigh, looked at me and then he kissed my lips again. And though I was still mad at him, I kissed him back.

Chapter 33 - [Beauty and the Goodbye]

After the encounter with the old lady, my relationship with Atem suddenly felt awkward. I mean, we acted normal... the rest of the trip was great. But there was something off about us now.

We did practically everything we could possible do in that foreign city, like visiting museums, a science center, eating at multiple different restaurants and much more. And then we made our way home.

It was during my ride home that I started to think.

Driving always gave you time to just think, especially when you were driving in the middle of nowhere, not having to worry too much about signs and random idiots running across the streets.

And I eventually realized what the problem was.

Have you ever had someone in your life who you knew for certain was going to leave you? Maybe someone struck with a disease or a grandparent who you know has a certain number of days to live. Or maybe something less morbid... like a family member or friend who's moving away for good...

Well, it was the feeling you get when stuff like that happened. That's what I was feeling.

I had to be real with myself.

I knew now that if Atem was given the chance to go home, he would take it. To be fair... he kind of *had* to. No matter how much I didn't like the idea, he was right. If he was sent back... he *could* change what happened. Maybe even rescue

some people.

And some was better than none.

Plus... his *brother* was *murdered*.

I couldn't even imagine how that felt.

If he got a chance to fix that... how could he *not* take it?

To add to this, that weird old lady said that he *was* going home soon. How much did I believe her? Well I dunno. After all this craziness that has happened over the year... I guess so.

But even if the old lady was a fake who didn't know what she was talking about and was simply hoping that we would pay her to get her to read our palms... one thing that was certain was that the wizard *was* back.

And he wasn't happy.

I had no idea what the wizard was gonna end up doing to Atem... but it wasn't going to be good.

And if I put what the old lady said and the fact that the wizard is back together... my best guess was that the wizard was going to send Atem back.

When I turned my head and looked at Atem, he was simply staring out the window as he ran his fingers through Neferkiti's fur. He was completely preoccupied by whatever he was looking at outside.

Or maybe he was deep in thought like me.

I looked back at the road.

And suddenly considered going to therapy.

I guess, over the trip, I started to accept it.

Like I said before, I couldn't blame Atem for wanting to go back home. That was selfish... and childish.

No matter how weird this sounded, even in my own head... Atem was a King.

He was a goddamn Pharaoh.

He had a kind of responsibility that a schoolgirl like me who bakes cakes for a living could never understand.

Despite loving him, I was in no place to pretend that I could understand how he felt.

And I guess that was what sucked about being in a relationship with someone who was so different from you.

When we finally got home, Neferkiti was absolutely thrilled. She was running around the apartment, practically jumping in joy.

I called Uncle Ethan first, since he was worried about me driving long distances on my own. He was relieved to hear that we were home safe.

The next person I had to call was Ro.

Ro was also relieved that we were home safe, and she apparently missed me so much that she wanted me to come over.

I said yes.

Despite realizing that I may not have that much time left with Atem... I decided that a moment away from him may help clear my mind out.

I left Atem home to do whatever he wanted, which was probably reading and took my bicycle down the elevator.

Biking to Ro and Alec's place was in itself enough to make me feel a little better.

It wasn't that far away, but it was far enough to make me get a good leg stretch after a long drive and a good breath of fresh air.

When I got there, I took my bike up their elevator and rolled it right into her door, which was already open.

Ro, who was in the living room doing some stretches in her workout clothes,

grinned at me when she saw me. "Hey girl!" She said as she walked over to me and gave me a hug.

And though I was so certain that I was feeling a lot better... and that I had accepted everything that was going on... I burst into tears.

Ro hugged me tightly as I cried and when I had finally let it all out, there was no way that she was going to let me get away with saying: "I'm fine."

She would beat it out of me if she had to, I knew that for sure.

So I didn't hold it in.

I told her everything.

After threatening to "beat his ass to the moon," and to "shove that sense of responsibility he feels straight up his ass," she suddenly settled down and got serious. "So you're literally not gonna fight him to stay?"

"It's not like he's leaving tonight," I said. Though of course, I didn't really know that. "But no. I'm not."

She didn't look like she totally approved of that.

"I can't, Ro. That's not fair," I sighed. "I mean, I'm pretty sure he already feels bad about it. If he really cares about me then this is pretty much a lose-lose situation for him. If he stays, Egypt stays destroyed and his family stays murdered. If he leaves, he loses me. And frankly... I think the first one is more serious."

Ro shrugged, sitting next to me on the couch. "I dunno, girl. This seems so unreal," she started. "Besides, if he goes back and saves Egypt... doesn't that mean history will change? Like... doesn't that pose a risk to us?"

I hesitated.

I hadn't thought about that.

For some reason, I started to chuckle. "No way. That's impossible." That sounded ridiculous, right?

Ro thought about it. "The thought *is* kind of weird, isn't it?"

"I mean... we were alive and stuff before he got here..."

But the more and more I thought about it, the more confused I got. How did this time travel physics thing work? What Ro said made sense, but would Atem saving Egypt mean we wouldn't exist anymore?

"And besides... that's if he's leaving. It's not like it's *certain* he is."

"The old lady said—"

"She may have been a fake."

"But she knew he was from an ancient time!"

Ro hesitated, and then she fell silent for a moment.

After a while, she sighed. "Listen, May," she started, turning around fully in her seat to face me. "Let's just say he *is* leaving."

I looked at her, waiting for her to continue. Ro usually said helpful things. I needed her words of wisdom.

"If he *is* leaving... then that's just what was meant to happen," she reached out and held my hand. "You need to remember that couples separate all the time... and you're in this totally messed up situation with a guy who lived thousands of years ago and I guess you shouldn't be too surprised with how it ended up. It shouldn't be surprising that the way he leaves is as crazy as the way he came, you know?"

I nodded.

"And besides... if he does leave, as cheesy as this sounds, he won't really be gone."

I smirked and looked down at our hands, "ya, I guess."

"Really though, May," she said. "This may sound weird, but people that know him, albeit not that many, often say that you changed him. Which is true, but

something strange is that I've noticed that he's not the only one that changed."

When I looked back at her, she was smiling.

"In a way... you've changed too, May," she said, surprising me. "I was talking to Alec about it recently, actually."

"What are you talking about?" I asked. "I haven't changed."

Ro smiled. "Alec described it as... some your kindness rubbing off on Atem and some of his meanness rubbing off on you."

My eyebrows rose. "And that's a good thing?"

"Yeah!" She chuckled. "Okay, maybe meanness is a bad word... what I mean is, his... strength? Atem was quite the tough guy."

I narrowed my eyes. "Really?"

"Yeah, May. You've grown too. A year ago, you were a little childish and a little stupid and too kind for your own good. Now you've matured. A lot. You're not as dumb... and you're a healthy kind of nice."

I didn't know if she was making fun of me or just saying it.

She probably noticed the frown on my face and she rolled her eyes. "C'mon May, lets be real. First of all, you allowed a crazy stranger to stay at your place. Second of all, there was a time that you kicked said crazy stranger out for a bit. Third of all, you said yes to Dom when he asked you out after all the bullshit he put you through. Fourth of all, you have daddy issues. And finally, you *believed* a guy who told you he was an Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh."

I started to laugh, even though this time she actually *was* dissing me. But I had to admit... that was kind of funny.

Cause she was totally right about all of that.

"*And*, might I add that one year ago, if you were dating a guy for a year and he had to leave permanently and you would never see him again... you'd be bawling and being a spoiled brat and throwing a hissy fit," she said. "Now... you're

talking about how you don't want to be selfish and you're thinking about it from his perspective. And jeez, May... you've grown."

I smiled at her.

"As crazy as it sounds, I think Atem has something to do with that. And that's something that you'll never lose. Ever. That's a part of you now."

I patted her hand with my other hand, "you make me feel so many emotions all at once."

She laughed. "Seriously, May... I'm proud of you for being so mature," she said. "But if he *does* leave... you need to know that I'm here still. We'll get through this."

I nodded. "I know."

"For now... just cherish your time with him. I know you really care about him so make sure you make every second count."

She was right.

That was exactly what I would do.

After riding my bike back home and making my way up the elevator, I greeted Atem with a "hey! Let's go out for dinner."

I was exhausted from the trip back and didn't really want to cook. Plus, I felt like a date was necessary.

Atem had no objections. He simply requested that we go to the place that has the teriyaki beef.

I was fine with that.

It didn't take long for him to get ready, since he didn't change completely since we got here, so I was back in the elevator in no time.

When the elevator passed the ground floor and made its way down to the parking garage, Atem looked at me. "We're not walking?"

I shook my head.

"I'm too tired to walk," I said. "And I'm hungry. We'll get there faster if we drive."

Atem rolled his eyes, "you are so lazy. A little bit of walking wouldn't hurt."

I rolled my eyes back at him, "well fine. You walk, I'll drive."

When I looked at him, I saw him smirking.

I assumed it was because he was just as pleased as I was that we were acting like our normal, annoying selves.

When the elevator doors opened, I pressed the button on the keys and my brother's car beeped twice as it unlocked the doors.

The beep echoed through the garage, and as usual it was silent.

"Actually," Atem suddenly said. "Let's go to the place that has those delicious sandwiches with the beef. And the fries."

"McDonalds?" I asked, a little disappointed. I kind of preferred the other place.

Atem nodded. "Their fries taste excellent."

I was gonna argue with him, but as soon as he finished his sentence, I felt an odd gust of wind and then a harsh pain in my chest.

Before I even knew it, I was flying through the air as Atem shouted my name and only came to a stop when my back hit the cement wall of the garage.

I fell onto my knees, my entire body aching in pain as I let out a gasp.

Atem was running towards me as I tried to stand up, but suddenly he also went flying, but stopped when he hit a car.

The alarm of the car went off, filling the parking garage with an almost unbearably loud wailing sound, and when I looked up while covering my ears and wincing from the pain, I saw the red-eyed wizard walking towards me... a horrifying glare on his face.

He looked exactly how he looked when I saw him a year ago. The same kind of scary and the same kind of anger. This time, however, he was holding this weird staff with a red orb at the top.

And he didn't hesitate to grab me by the neck with one hand and push me up against the wall.

I coughed, trying to fight away.

Everything had happened so fast that I couldn't even process it.

And the wailing of the car wasn't helping the situation.

I heard Atem shout my name again as he ran towards me, but the wizard turned his body, still holding me by the neck, and held his staff out towards Atem.

I screamed, a panic rushing through my body.

Atem froze, an odd red glow appearing around him. It was obvious that he couldn't move, and I assumed it had to do with the staff that the wizard was holding.

There were cameras in the parking garage. Plus that car was making so much noise. Security was bound to come down and help us eventually.

But I wasn't going to wait that long.

While the wizard was distracted by Atem, I lifted my leg and kicked the son-of-a-bitch as hard as I could in his private area.

The wizard let go of me, wincing slightly but recovering quickly.

However, in this time Atem had been released from his hold and pounced on the wizard, knocking him to the ground and making him drop his staff. "Go get my sword!" Atem yelled, reminding me of what happened a year ago.

It was still in my trunk.

The same place it had been for the past year.

So I ran as fast as I could to the car.

I dropped my keys somewhere during the entire mess so I ended up having to open the trunk from the button near the steering wheel. But when I did, I ran to the back, pulled out the super heavy sword and ran back to Atem. "Here!" I shouted as I held it by the sheath.

Atem didn't look at me. He reached behind him, grabbed the sword by the handle and pulled it right out of the sheath. It made a sharp sound as it came out of the sheath, making me more nervous than I already was.

Atem held the blade of the sword against the wizard's neck, "what the hell do you think you're doing?" Atem asked, shouting.

While he was down, I picked up the staff, holding it tightly against my body. Maybe if he didn't have it, he would be weakened.

"I thought sending you here would make you miserable," he said, rather calmly despite the glare on his face. "I was wrong. But that's fine, I'm going to fix *everything*."

Suddenly, Atem was knocked off of him.

Atem got up quickly and held the sword in front of him.

The wizard's head snapped towards me. He held his hand out and I felt the staff start to pull away from me. But I didn't let go of it. I held on tightly, being pulled forward with it.

The wizard glared. "Never in my life," he hissed in his deep voice, "have I met a woman as *annoying* as you."

Finally, I heard someone shout "Hey!" with a loud voice.

It was security.

The security officer ran towards us, saying something into his walkie-talkie.

But the wizard moved his hand from me and waved it at the officer.

The staff, which was still in my hands, started to glow and a ray of red light flew out of it, smashing into the security officer and knocking him out cold.

I gawked.

And without thinking for a second more, I took the staff and swung it like a bat, smashing it against one of the concrete pillars.

"Nice try," the wizard simply said.

I hesitated, looked at the staff and saw the red light of the orb still floating there.

This time, when the wizard held his hand up, the red ball of light went straight into the palm of his hand.

"This time," the wizard said as he took a step towards Atem, "I will make you suffer a horrifying death with the rest of your people."

Atem's eyes widened as a ray of red light left the ball in his hand and flew in his direction.

I screamed, running towards the wizard with what was now a plain old stick.

Atem tried to swing his sword at the ray of light but it didn't work. Instead, he was suddenly surrounded by a bright light.

I jumped onto the back of the wizard, startling him.

I noticed almost instantly that he had clearly gotten weaker. He could barely throw me off now. Atem must have been right, using his powers made him considerably weaker.

So I smacked him with my hands and fought him the best I could. "Stop it!" I screamed. "What are you doing? Leave him alone!"

"May, get away!" Atem shouted from the light. He tried to get out of it but was stopped. It had trapped him.

And I could barely see him.

I felt my heart race as I started to cry. "Stop it!" I screamed again.

The wizards' skin seemed to shrivel and he fell onto his knees.

I continued to fight him as aggressively as I could, and when I noticed that he tried to hold that ball of light away from me, I reached out and tried to grab it.

"Don't do anything to him!" I yelled. "Leave him alone!"

"May!"

And just then, I grabbed the orb.

Despite looking like light, it felt like glass.

So I lifted my free hand up and slapped the wizard straight across the face with as much force as I could.

He had weakened so much that he fell to the ground.

And as quickly as I could, I squeezed the orb.

I squeezed as hard as I could, ignoring the burning in my palms.

And suddenly, I heard this high pitch screech as the orb of light shattered in my hands.

The wizards started to shout hysterically, "*fool!*" He crawled over to the shards on the floor, trying to gather them.

Though the wizard seemed devastated by the broken orb, when I looked up at Atem, the light was still there, and he was fading.

My breathing hastened as I ran over to him. "Atem!" I reached out and tried to touch him, but my hand went right through. "No, no, no, no, no—"

"May."

I was bawling.

I couldn't even hug him.

"You have to get away from here," Atem said. "Get away from the wizard—"

"No! I can't! You can't go! Not yet! *Take me with you!*"

"Listen to me, May!" He yelled angrily, startling me.

I continued to cry, falling down onto my knees. This was all happening way too fast. It kind of even felt like a nightmare.

He knelt down in front of me, "May, please."

When I looked at him, he reached up and held my face in his hands, though I couldn't feel it.

After a moment, he let out a breath. "I'm so sorry, May."

"You jerk!" I shouted, "couldn't you have waited a day? Just *one* day!"

He smiled at me, despite the situation. "May, I love you," he said, softly. "You will be in my heart forever."

"Shut up," I cried. I wanted to hug him. "You can't go yet... I'm *not* ready."

"Neither am I, May... but *please* you *must* leave. *Now*."

I shook my head. I guess... no matter how much I tried to accept it, I couldn't.

I didn't want him to leave.

Especially like this... when I least expected it.

"May." His voice had already faded too, and when I looked up he was almost completely gone.

"Please," I begged, getting desperate and not knowing what else to do.

"Go, May," Atem said. "Go to Aurora, or Blake... or anyone. Just away from here. You need to be safe. I love you."

He was rushing to say all of that.

Because when he finished saying that, that was it. The light had faded and all I could hear was the stupid wailing of the stupid car.

I was in a state of shock. I couldn't even move. But then I heard a rustling

coming from behind me.

When I looked up, I felt a pressure in my back.

"I won't rest until I kill you too," I heard the wizards voice say.

Then everything turned white and all I could think of was that I didn't even get to say a proper I love you, or even a proper goodbye to Atem.



Chapter 34 - [Familiarity and the Pharaoh]

Hey all!

**I hope you were all excited to get this new update! And I hope you enjoy it!
=D**

**If you are enjoying the story than please vote for all the chapters you like!
And don't forget to comment and let me know what you think, I *love*
reading what you all have to say!**

**I apologize for the upsetting chapter from last week ='(! But hopefully this
one is a bit better!**

Thanks for reading as always and enjoy!

-Luckycharms <3



All I saw was blackness. Blackness and pain and this ache in my heart that I could not understand. I felt a hatred and an anger for a reason that I could not remember, and when I opened my eyes, for a moment, all I knew was confusion.

I didn't understand this confusion.

What had happened?

Had I fallen asleep?

There was a comforting, familiar warmth on my skin and the smell of the air was delightful.

But this was odd.

It was odd that I noticed this feeling of the heat and the smell of the air. That was unlike me.

What was going on?

"My Pharaoh?"

My head snapped towards one of my court members, the one who spoke. He was a middle-aged man who I called Lord Ahmose. He was my vizier and my most trusted advisor. When he met my eyes, he blinked, looked down and bowed. "As you wish."

From the corner of my eyes, I saw a set of guards holding down a frail looking man who was clearly a peasant. "I'm innocent!" he shouted. "Please! My Pharaoh, please!"

Something tugged at my heart as I blinked. "What..."

I stared blankly at everything, looking around as the shouts of the man echoed through the room.

I was in my throne room.

There were maybe fifty noblemen and women watching the man be dragged off. All of them wore white robes and makeup and jewelry. At first glance, they all kind of looked identical to each other.

My five royal court members who stood at both sides of my throne, two on my left side and three on my right, were silently exchanging glances, looking upset.

And then, in my confusion, I shouted. "Wait!"

The guards halted almost immediately. Everyone looked at me.

It started to come back to me as I turned and looked properly at the frail man who was being dragged off.

"No," I said. "Let him go. What are you doing? Let him *go*."

The guards looked at me, confused.

"My Pharaoh?" Lord Ahmose called.

I turned to him, my heart racing.

I closed my eyes for a moment, putting my elbow on the arm of my throne and

squeezing my temples with my finger and thumb.

May's face suddenly appeared in my head, making my heart skip a beat.

And at that moment, *everything* came back to me. May, Neferkiti, the wizard, all my new friends in the future, that apartment... everything.

And the first thing I did when I remembered was I stood up quickly and looked to where my mother usually stood. To the left of me.

Always by my side.

She was staring at me with shock and confusion in her eyes.

I felt a huge relief to see her beautiful face.

The tall, fair woman with long black hair and a little bit of silver streaks looked exactly how she always did. She wore her usual white, flowing dress that would dust the floor as she walked. After my father died, she stopped wearing a lot of jewelry, so all that she wore was a simple necklace and earrings, both of which were gifts to her from my father. Her eyes were a black, like my own, yet hers were a thousand times less frightening.

And the more I looked at her, the more relieved and happy I felt.

"Mother," I said. It came out as a whisper.

She hesitated.

I walked towards her and pulled her into a tight hug.

The entire throne room fell silent and I could sense my mothers' confusion through the stiffness of her body. But after a moment, she calmed down and hugged me back. "My son..." my mother said in my language. "What strangeness is coming out of your mouth? Are you ill?"

And then I realized it.

I was still speaking in English. In May's language.

I tightened my hug for a moment before releasing her and holding her face in my

hands. "Mother," I said in my language. It felt strange to speak it... it had been so long, yet it came back without a problem. "I am so sorry. Please forgive me for what I've done. I'm so happy to see you safe."

She stared at me, placing her hands over mine. She looked unbelievably happy when she heard my words, yet she was still confused. She then reached up and touched my forehead with her hand... a feeling that I hadn't felt in years. Not because I was gone for so long, but because I treated her so poorly. "Are you ill, my son?"

I let out a laugh, kissed her forehead and then stepped away, leaving her confused. I would explain it all to her soon.

"Leave the man be," I ordered, this time in my language so the guards would understand.

They released him immediately.

"Go home," I said to the man. "You are free to go. I'm sorry for all that happened to you. I will make sure you and your family are compensated."

The frail man stared at me in shock. "M-my Pharaoh?"

I gave him a small smile before turning to Lord Ahmose. "I need you to release anyone else who you feel I have wronged and sent to be punished. Compensate them and their families with whatever means necessary so that they can be comfortable."

Lord Ahmose gawked for a moment before nodded. "O-of course my Pharaoh. I will do that immediately."

The frail man suddenly fell onto his knees as Lord Ahmose rushed out with a few guards. When I looked back at him, I could see that he was crying. "Thank you, my Pharaoh!" He said between sobs. "Thank you so much!"

After asking the guards to help him home, I sat back down on the throne and rubbed my face with my hands.

"My Pharaoh," my mother said as she walked over to me and placed her hands on my shoulders. "What has gotten into you?"

I simply shook my head. There was so much running through my mind right now.

Was May okay?

Had she gotten away in time?

What did me being back mean for her?

"My son?"

When I looked up at my mother, I could see clear happiness on her face. A kind of happiness I haven't seen on her face in a long time. Actually, the last time I saw it may have been when my father was alive.

But everyone was still utterly confused.

How could I blame them, though?

For them, a second had passed. For me, it was an entire year.

I let out a loud sigh and sat up straight. "I need everyone except my court and mother to leave."

All the noblemen and noblewomen broke out into whispers, though they did exactly what I told them to. After a moment, the entire throne room emptied. Only my mother, the four remaining court members and myself stayed behind.

I stared at everyone for a moment, trying to figure out what to say.

The five royal court members had always been loyal to me, even when I was at my cruelest. I knew I could trust them.

Aside from the tall and strong Lord Ahmose, with rather bright brown eyes, a bald head and a usually friendly smile, there was Lady Hema, Lady Taka, Lord Renefer and Lord Hepu.

Lord Renefer was a slightly old but powerful man. He was strong, despite his greying hairs and was also the commander in chief of our nations' military. He always wore a beard, which I thought was suitable since it made him look a lot

more fierce, especially with his small dark eyes.

Lady Hema was a kind woman who was very well spoken. It was for this very reason that this calm woman was left to be the overseers of foreign affairs. She was very close to my mother and had young children of her own. From when I was a child, I always remembered her being very friendly and an excellent cook.

Her hair was long and black and her skin was darkened because of all the traveling she did out in the sun. Her eyes were a lovely shade of brown and her active lifestyle had led her to be quite fit and capable.

The overseer of religious affairs and the High Priest of Amun was Lord Hepu. He was a skinny, bald man who had dark skin and large, brown eyes. He always wore a robe that covered his legs like pants and one of his shoulders while the other remained bare. Lord Hepu was the epitome of calm and thoughtful. He had served my father years ago too and I remember my father would make jokes about the constant enlightened look in his eyes.

But anyhow, he was a good man, trustworthy and constantly looking out for my family.

Finally, there was Lady Taka. She was a very old woman with a head full of grey hair that she always had braided back. Aside from probably being the most intelligent and most educated woman in Egypt, she was a respected elder of the palace. She was mostly a part of the court as an advisor and despite her age, she had a quick thinking mind, which helped in all aspects of ruling.

Lady Taka was the only member of my court who never really completely feared me. She was the one who often spoke against my tirades, though most of the time I simply would not listen to her.

In the time I had spent staring at them, trying to find the words, Lord Ahmose had returned. "My Pharaoh," he started. "Officer Saini has started the process of removing them."

I nodded.

And then I looked at all of them. After a moment, I sighed before lowering my head. "I'm sorry."

The men and women looked at each other in shock.

"My Pharaoh," Lady Taka called. "What has gotten into you? This change is good but what happened? One second you are sending a man to be executed, the next second the tone of your voice and the look in your eyes has completely changed."

"I don't know how to explain..." I reached up to run my fingers through my hair, a habit I had created in May's world. But my crown surprised me. As did my nearly bald head.

Everything felt so strange.

Finally, I took a breath and decided to just let it out.

"I was cursed," I said.

My court members and my mother all looked surprised. "You were?" My mother asked. "But how? When?"

I tried to think of when to start. "Last time, when this happened... I chose to have that man executed simply because I was not in the mood to give him a trial and because I hoped killing him would send more fear through other possible criminals. Then I left and... mother, you came after me to stop me but I ignored you," I said as I tried to remember all the details. "And then when I went to my room, there was a wizard there who was waiting for me. *He* cursed me."

"But... what was the curse?" Lord Ahmose asked in confusion.

"He sent me three thousand years into the future."

My royal court and my mother gawked. "Three *thousand* years?" Lady Hema asked. "How on earth... what happened there?"

I wondered how much they all believed me.

For some reason, I had a feeling that they did for the most part. This was not a time like May's where magic did not exist. Everyone here believed in magic and curses. May said multiple times that my situation must be kept a secret because otherwise people would think I was crazy. Here, that was not the case.

"He assumed that this time was horrible. He wanted me to suffer—"

"But you're back!" My mother said. "So he must have failed."

I nodded. "Almost immediately after I left, Egypt fell into chaos and was eventually attacked by the People of the Sea," I turned to my mother. "They murdered Khamenatem... and apparently you went into a temple to pray for my wellbeing, only to be burned to death when the People of the Sea attacked the capital."

My mother put a hand over her mouth.

"But your prayers were heard by the gods." I said quickly, realizing that such words would have worried my mother. "Thanks to your prayers, I did not just land in a random place. I found this girl... who took care of me and kept me safe in that unbelievable world."

"A girl?" A couple of my court members said together.

I nodded. "That world I was sent to... there is no way I would have survived on my own. It is *very* strange. There is no such thing as magic and there are no significantly powerful kings or queens. The nights are always noisy and never completely dark... and the days lack life. The people are very cold and self centered and ignorant...."

My court stared at me with wide eyes, waiting for me to continue.

"Yet," I said before sighing. "It is not all that bad. May... the girl who rescued me, she is very kind and giving. She has friends and family who are just as kind, but also family who is cruel. But anyways, the wizard was unhappy with the fact that I was not suffering. So after a year he reverted the curse and I'm back here."

"A full year went by, my Pharaoh?" Lord Renefer asked. He seemed the most skeptical, but he could not deny that my sudden change in personality had no better explanation.

I nodded.

"So this girl... is she the reason for this change of heart?" Lady Taka asked.

I hesitated. I guess that would be true. "Yes."

Lady Taka surprised me by letting out a huff.

But before I could even try to wonder what the huff meant, Lord Ahmose spoke up. "So if this is all true, my Pharaoh... does that mean you've changed?"

I hesitated some more. "I believe so."

A sense of relief filled the faces of all my court members and they all sighed happily, as if the entire curse and what had happened to me hadn't mattered. All that seemed to matter was my supposed change of heart.

I rolled my eyes. "You are *not* understanding the seriousness of this."

The men and women looked at me apologetically. It was clear that they still had *some* fear for me.

"This wizard sent me back with the intention of harming me in one way or another," I said. "Not to enjoy myself and to entertain you."

"But what exactly does he intend on doing?" Lord Renefer asked. "We can take on a measly wizard—

"Yet I sense some great trouble," The calm Lord Hepu said, his voice soft and rather quiet. "I hate to say this but I truly do not believe that our king is completely safe now that he is home."

I nodded. "Precisely," I said. "If my assumptions are correct, then the People of the Sea are preparing their attack now.

Seriousness filled the room almost instantly.

"After I left the first time," I started, "the People of the Sea invaded and attacked. They used the chaos caused by my absence and Egypt fell. This time around, however, I am still here... and in case anything happens, you must stand your ground and prepare for war. It's better to be safe than sorry."

Everyone was silent now, and Lord Renefer bowed first. "I will prepare the army to march north," he said. "If the Sea People are coming then that is where they

will come first."

I nodded. "How long will it take to get them all ready?"

"Give me three days to mobilize, my Pharaoh."

I nodded again, pleased that he was already on top of things. It made me feel some relief.

All I cared about right at that moment was making sure that Egypt was safe.

Whether the wizard liked it or not, he had given me a second chance. And I was going to take that second chance and do everything I could to not waste it.

"I will join you," I said. "I wish to see my brother as well."

Lord Renefer nodded. "Of course, my Pharaoh."

The rest of the court members bowed immediately after that and then all of them agreed that they too will do what was needed to prepare for war.

If the Sea People really were coming to try and take my nation... I would be ready.

We spent almost the entire night making plans and preparations, and when we were finally done I wanted nothing more than to sleep.

I could not deny that I felt a little bit of worry about the thought of returning to my room.

The last time I was in that room, the wizard was there.

And while I was deep in thought as I walked to my room, I didn't even notice my mother's calls.

"Akhenatem," she called. She caught my attention by grabbing my arm.

I was surprised to hear that.

It had been a long time since she had called me by my name. She almost always referred to me as 'son' or 'Pharaoh.'

When I looked at her, she had a happy smile on her face.

"What is it, mother?"

She held my hands in hers.

"What you said is quite hard to believe," she started. "However... this is strange."

"What is?"

"This..." She remained silent for a moment. "For some reason, I remember you and I fighting in this hallway after you told the guards to execute the innocent man."

I smirked. I remembered that too. "You told me that the gods would punish me."

"And in a way I was right."

I nodded. "You were."

She smiled at me, tightening her hold on my hand. "My dear son," she started. "You have changed so much in a matter of moments, yet at the same time you have not changed at all."

I did not understand that... but she seemed happy so I assumed it was a good thing.

"I am so relieved by this. How mystical this girl in this other cursed world must have been."

I snorted now, surprising my mother. "She was anything but mystical, I can assure you."

"But if she had the ability to do this to you... in my eyes she is a gift from the gods."

She was.

To me... yes, she was.

"Where is she now? This girl?"

"She could not come with me. She's still in her time."

My mother kept her eyes on me. "Did you thank her before you left?"

A sudden odd rush of sadness filled me.

I hadn't thanked her.

Not once...

Not ever.

In the entire one year of knowing her and living with her and even caring for her, I hadn't thanked her once.

Well, maybe that one time when I was intoxicated, but that did *not* count.

I let out a breath and my mother tightened her hold on my hands, "Akhenatem?"

I looked away. "I didn't thank her."

She looked at me sadly. "My dear, do you... love her?"

I pulled my hands away from her and then sighed. "Goodnight, mother." I said before I turned around and walked away.

I could sense her worry, but she did not question me any further and left me alone.

When I got to my room, the first thing I did was look in a mirror.

Our mirrors here in Egypt were not as perfect and as clear as those in May's time. You could not see yourself as clearly or as accurately as in the shiny, smooth mirrors of the future. But of course, ours did their jobs just fine.

When I looked into the mirror, I was filled with shock.

I looked nothing like I remembered myself to look.

When I removed my crown and that just made it worse.

I was nearly bald, with very short hair on my head. My long beard had returned. Makeup covered my eyes and all this jewelry looked unbelievably extravagant.

I sighed.

Though this was exactly who I was, I suddenly didn't feel like myself.

The first thing I did was pull out the knife I used to trim my facial hair and cut off the beard. My court would think I was crazy in the morning, but that was fine. I was the Pharaoh, what more could they say to me?

I cleaned it all up, trying to make it look as familiar as I possibly could.

And I left the mess on the table. I would clean it up in the morning.

After that, I walked into my version of the washroom, which consisted of a large bucket of warm water that was replaced frequently by the maids. I washed my face as well as I could to remove the makeup.

When I was done that, I returned to the mirror.

I was a little bit more comfortable with what I saw now.

All that needed to change was the hair.

I let out a breath, scratched my head and then started to take off all my jewelry and clothes. However, it was when I was taking off my jewelry that I noticed something.

I turned back into the mirror, placing my large gold collar and all my armbands and rings and earrings and everything onto the table. What shocked me was the thin, tiny chain that was hidden underneath my collar.

My heart began to beat faster as I touched it and looked closely at it.

From what I understood, nothing from May's world, aside from my memories, had come here with me. Not the clothes that I was wearing or even the way I looked.

But, for some reason, around my neck was the Ankh necklace that May had

given me. The one that had once belonged to her aunt.

I tried to swallow back a lump in my throat as I shook my head and climbed into bed. I did not understand why this happened.

I was worried more now.

For some reason, I always felt that this necklace had some sort of magic in it. It managed to wipe away the nightmares I was having and according to May, it calmed her down when she was worried or scared.

Why did I still have it then?

May would need this. This should have been returned to her.

But nonetheless, I kept it around my neck. I didn't have it in me to take it off. So I left it on though I removed the rest of my jewelry, and then I tried to go to sleep.

Of course, despite the fact that I was so exhausted and in need of a good night's sleep, I couldn't sleep.

All I could do was spend the rest of the night thinking of May.

It was a cold night, as all nights were in Egypt. And it was absolutely silent. All I could hear was my own breathing, and if I listened closely I could hear a few night critters through the open balcony of my room and also the sound of fire crackling on the torches of guards who patrolled the palace at night.

In May's world, this was the kind of silent nights that I wanted.

But now that I had gotten it... something felt off.

I felt alone... and I didn't like it.

Something about May's tiny apartment and Neferkiti's constant presence made me never feel alone.

But here... this large, dark, cold room that was filled with nothing but silence

filled me with a strange feeling. And this feeling did not help the worried thoughts that ran through my head.

I had no way of knowing now if she was alright... if she was safe. When I disappeared, I saw that the wizard was still with her... what if he had gotten to her?

I wanted to come back and save my people. I thought that was the right thing to do. And though this was what I wanted... I wondered for the whole night what my selfishness had done to May.

Was I really never going to see her again?

She was the only woman I have ever loved. I had never felt that way about anyone before. And yet, in the end all I did was hurt her... just like what I did to everyone else in my life.

Chapter 35 - [A Thank You and the Pharaoh]

I did not sleep one bit last night, though I couldn't blame myself for that. There were way too many things going on in my head and sleep would not be permitted.

Plus, part of me worried that the wizard would return. After all, it was *this* night that the wizard cursed me.

But I got out of bed the next morning, completely fine. I was still here. In tact. And I had not seen the wizard at all.

Being back in Egypt meant returning to being a king. And being a king meant a lot.

First and foremost... I was up before the sun had even risen. I had to take part in the morning prayers, which meant getting cleaned up and ready well before the sun was born again into the sky.

Prayers took up a good chunk of my day. The first set of prayers was at dawn, the second was at noon, and the third was right before the sun set.

Getting used to *not* doing that was one of the hardest things to do during my time in May's world. But I kept it going in my own way.

Now, however, was time to do it the right way. Especially since I was going to need all the help I could get to challenge the People of the Sea.

When I stepped out of my room after getting ready, Lord Hepu greeted me with a low bow. "My Pharaoh."

I nodded my head at him and when he rose, a small, sad smile formed on his

face.

"You look... tired."

"I barely slept," I said as I started to walk towards the temple. I took a deep breath of the morning air and almost instantly felt a lot more awake.

I could hear the early rising animals and the distant voices of the villagers as they all prepared for the day ahead of them.

This was nothing like what I felt in May's world. I could never smell this clean air or hear nothing but calmness at any time.

"That's understandable," Lord Hepu said, "you have gone through a lot."

"Do you think everyone believes me?" I asked.

Lord Hepu was always honest. He kind of had to be. He was the High Priest of Amun and what he preached was honesty and the upholding of *ma'at*. It was his duty to practice what he preached.

So I trusted that he would give me an honest answer.

"I believe they find it hard to grasp, as do I, my Pharaoh," he said. "But they have no reason to think you are lying."

I nodded, feeling a little relieved. It felt a lot more satisfying to know that they believed me to some extent.

"Despite the harshness in your rule, my Pharaoh... you were never the one to lie."

I nodded again. "Well, it's a good thing I maintained one virtuous trait."

Lord Hepu smiled. "It is never too late to be forgiven for your mistakes. So long as you are honest and truthful in your apology."

"Thank you," I said.

From the corner of my eye, I saw him look at me with slight shock on his face.

I don't think he's ever heard me say those words since I was a child. But the eventual smile on his face made me feel like he was glad I said it.

During the prayers and welcoming the sun back into the sky with incense and offerings and the chants of the songstresses, I felt a relief that I had not felt in a while.

The smell of the incense and the beating of the drums and the chanting and the calm of the morning were all familiar and relaxing sensations.

I felt so much better.

Though I couldn't help but wish that May could get a chance to feel this too.

When the prayers were over, the sun had risen enough into the sky to light up my lands and wake up any of the people who were still fast asleep.

And it was only about six in the morning.

But six in the morning was when the day would start for me. I was in the throne room and ready start with a new day of doing what I could to keep my country safe.

After about a couple hours of sorting out internal affairs, we sent away the other nobles and began discussing more important things. Specifically, what to do about the People of the Sea.

Obviously the wizard had still not attacked. However, what worried me was that I had no idea what he was planning.

Or if he was even back for that matter.

What if he wasn't attacking because he never made it back? Though if that were the case, that would mean he was still in the future with May.

But even that didn't make any sense.

I sighed out loud.

In fact, none of this made sense.

"We have mobilized half of the capital's soldiers, my Pharaoh," Lord Renefer said. "The messenger has gone out to inform the soldiers at the other main cities. We should have no problem with our original plans."

"Good," I said. "Has the messenger reached my brother?"

"I do not believe so," Lord Ahmose said. "It takes a couple days to get to Memphis. I think you will have already departed by the time the messenger arrives to give the news to your brother."

I nodded. Of course I should have known that already. I guess the stress and the confusion was getting to me.

"How sure are you really that the Sea People are actually going to attack?" Lady Taka asked.

I looked at her for a moment and then sighed. "I'm not certain. But they did last time, almost immediately after I left. So I have reason to assume that they are on their way."

Lady Taka blinked, "mobilizing the army is expensive, my King."

"I know that," I said. "But like I said before, it's better to stay safe than sorry."

"Lady Taka," Lord Hepu called. "I think we should trust the Pharaoh's instinct."

"Of course we should," Lady Taka said. "Especially now that he's back to his senses. But I just feel like it is important to remind him that mobilizing the army is expensive."

I let out a breath as I stared at her.

I think I liked it better when everyone was terrified of me.

"If you'll allow me to speak, my Pharaoh," Lord Ahmose started. "I have a suggestion."

"Go ahead," I said, leaning back against my throne. Lord Ahmose usually had excellent advice.

"I truly believe a good way to consolidate your position is to get married and have a child."

Everyone was silent as I raised an eyebrow.

"It would make everyone feel more comfortable about your decisions... and it would also bring some fear into the hearts of any of our opponents. An heir is a great weapon."

My other court members began to nod, agreeing with him.

When I didn't respond, he continued to speak. "You are getting old, my Pharaoh. Twenty-two and still unmarried is a questionable situation."

I hesitated.

Twenty-two?

I had completely forgotten that a year had been lost now that I was here.

That birthday I had spent with May never happened.

"What do you say, my Pharaoh?" Lord Ahmose asked, "I can find you the perfect bride within a matter of hours."

I exhaled loudly, before feeling my mother put her hand on my shoulder.

"Even if he were to get married... conceiving a child takes time," my mother said. "Why worry about that now?"

"But, Mother Queen," Lady Taka started, "Lord Ahmose is right. The Pharaoh is getting old. People have been asking questions for years now. At the very least a wedding with a noteworthy woman would be beneficial."

My mother hesitated.

One thing I liked about May's world was that twenty-two was not considered old. In fact, twenty-two was considered *very* young.

"I just do not think now is the time for a wedding," my mother said.

I knew she was trying to defend me. Or at the very least, to make me get some time to recover from all that had happened.

And to be honest, I needed it.

In the past, I had delayed marriage on purpose. I never felt the desire to get married and I never found it as important as the other thought it was.

Now, however, a lot had changed.

Marriage didn't seem as bad as it once was.

Of course, the idea of marrying someone other than the girl I loved seemed unappealing.

But despite that feeling inside me, I surprised myself and everyone in the room with my answer.

"Fine."

Everyone stared at me in shock.

"Really?" Lord Ahmose asked.

I nodded, getting up from my throne. "It's almost time for the afternoon prayers. I should get ready."

Lord Ahmose nodded quickly as I walked off. "Yes... yes, I will get it all sorted out for you before the night comes."

I nodded again, but couldn't ignore the sinking of my heart.

How could I say no, though?

I knew I was never going to see May again.

And I couldn't whine about it for the rest of my life. If marrying someone would help my position in this upcoming battle than doing that was necessary.

However, as I took a couple steps away from the steps to my throne, I felt a sharp pain on my neck.

I placed my hand on my neck, but pulled it away when I felt heat.

When I looked down, I saw the Aunty Maya's Ankh necklace glowing brightly, yet burning my skin.

I let out a gasp and lifted the necklace off the skin of my chest, trying to stop it from burning me. But of course, it just burned my hand instead.

"What..."

"What's wrong, my Pharaoh?" Lord Renefer asked as he walked towards me.

"My son?" My mother called, looking worried.

"What is that?" Lord Ahmose asked.

I let out a breath as the light got brighter, so bright that it was blinding and I had to cover my eyes, as did the rest of the court members. There was a high-pitched screeching noise and after what felt like a long moment, it stopped, the light faded and the necklace cooled down.

When I pulled my arm away from my eyes and my eyes adjusted, I was surprised by the presence of a girl standing about a step in front of me.

It took me a moment to process it all.

A long moment.

And in that moment, Lord Renefer and Lord Ahmose had pulled out their swords and held it out in front of them. Almost immediately after preparing their swords, the two men began their attack.

"*Stop!*" I yelled quickly as I held my hand out, snapping back into my sense. "*Don't!*"

They stopped in their tracks.

I took a step forward as she looked around with complete shock on her face.

When her eyes met mine, she froze.

She picked the *perfect* time to appear. The moment I started to doubt ever seeing her again... that foolish girl.

I reached out and held her tightly into my arms.

"May!"

She stood there frozen for another moment, and then wrapped her arms around me. "Atem!"

I could feel that she was crying since her cheek was touching my bare chest.

For some strange reason, though it had only been about a day, it felt like I hadn't seen her in months. Maybe even years.

"What's going on?" She whispered as she looked up at me.

When I looked back at her I saw the look of nervousness on her face. Nervousness and fear.

"Where are we?"

I held her face in my hands. "Egypt."

Her eyes widened.

She looked exactly like how she did when I left her in the parking garage of her apartment. Except now her hair was a mess and she looked exhausted.

"How did you get here? What happened?"

She shook her head in confusion. "I... um..." She hesitated. "The wizard... he hit me with something... and then there was a light and now I'm here."

My eyes narrowed.

He had sent her here?

But why?

Wouldn't that be helping me?

"What's the name of the first book we read together?" I asked.

She scowled. "Are you testing me? Seriously?"

"How can I know for sure that you aren't the wizard in disguise?"

May rolled her eyes. "For Whom the Bell Tolls."

"What's the name of your cat?"

"Neferkiti."

"What picture of you did I steal from your photo album and keep in my room?"

May raised her eyebrow, "What?"

I let out a laugh before kissing her lips.

Much to the shock of my royal court.

And my mother.

It felt nice to be able to kiss her again, even though it hadn't really been that long since I last kissed her. I felt relieved. And happy.

But at the same time, I felt horrible.

May being here was not exactly a good thing. Well, it was a good thing for me. But not for her.

This wasn't her home. What was to happen to her family and friends back in Oakville?

When I pulled away, May looked at me with a smirk. "I know now's not the time, but you stole a picture of me and kept it in your room?"

I rolled my eyes but held her hands in mine, "I'm happy to see you, May."

She smiled but it faded almost instantly as she turned her head and looked out at my gawking royal court.

I cleared my throat and kept a tight hold of one of May's hands as I turned to face them. "Well," I started in my own language. "This is May. And it is going to take me a lot of time to explain her to you... but she is my..."

I tried to think of the appropriate Egyptian translation of 'girlfriend.'

I could think of nothing.

Nothing except for 'lover.' And that felt too strong of a word to use when I was introducing her to my most trusted advisors and my mother for the first time.

But nonetheless, that was what I said. "She's my... love."

My royal court continued to gawk, but my mother gasped. A massive smile formed on her face as she stepped forward. "This is her?"

"My queen," Lord Renefer called, looking worried. "Maybe—"

"Oh, please," my mother said. "She's a young girl. She can't harm us."

"But she appeared out of nowhere, my Queen," Lady Hema said, cautiously.

My mother ignored her and kept coming towards us.

My royal court clearly didn't trust May like my mother seemed to. But I couldn't blame them. Like they said, she had appeared out of nowhere, spoke a different language and also had very strange clothing on.

It took May's friends a little while to accept me. And I assumed it would be the same situation here, with my family.

"Who is that?" May whispered in English. "What are they saying?"

But before I could answer, my mother had already reached us and had grabbed May's face in her hands. "Oh, my sweet child. Thank you."

May looked at my mother with confusion on her face, clearly not understanding what she was saying.

"What is she saying, 'Tem?'" She asked. Thankfully however, May didn't look

scared. Clearly she sensed that my mother meant no harm.

But suddenly, my mother lowered herself onto her knees, surprising myself and the rest of the court.

She bowed low, her hands touching the feet of May, who stepped backwards and behind me in shock. "What... what is she doing?"

"Thank you..." My mother said again. "Thank you for saving my son's life. The King's life. And thank you for changing his heart for the better. We are truly indebted to you."

The royal court looked at each other in shock, finally understanding my mother's lack of fear for this stranger who appeared out of nowhere.

And after a moment, they too got on their knees and bowed low.

"Atem!" May gasped. "What—"

"She's my mother," I smiled, knowing that she didn't understand. "And she's thanking you."

May bit her lip, shocked.

"They all are. They're thanking you for saving my life."

Hi everyone!

YAY!! I hope you enjoyed this update. I'm so sorry that the last couple updates were kinda sad! Thanks again for reading, as always!

Please don't forget to vote and comment and follow if you're enjoying the story! It means a lot to me and I LOVE reading what you guys thing!

Thank you!!!

Love,

Luckycharms <3



Chapter 36 - [Magic and the Pharaoh]

Hey everyone!

I have a question for you all! I've been having a little bit of difficulty figuring out what genre to put this story under. It's currently under Historical Fiction, but I'm not exactly sure if that one is the best one. So I wanted to ask what you guys thought!

The one's I'm thinking between are Fantasy, Historical Fiction and Teen Fiction! If you could let me know in the comment section which one you think is best, that would be really helpful for me! I don't want my story to be in the wrong genre, haha!

Thanks so much guys!! Please vote and comment and follow if you're enjoying the story!!

Love,

Luckycharms!!!! <3

P.S. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL THE WONDERFUL COMMENTS IN THE PREVIOUS TWO CHAPTERS!!!! They made me SO HAPPY!!! I was so happy to hear what you had to say and reading them was so much fun!!! THANK YOU!!!!!! <3



Despite the insanity of all that was going on... I had to run and conduct the afternoon prayers at the temple. Though May was confused and scared, I had no choice but to force her to stay alone in my bedroom until I returned.

And in order to prevent any further confusion or fear, I asked that no one spoke to her. Besides, it wasn't like they could understand each other anyways.

After the prayers, however, I rushed back to my room as fast as I could. Lord Hepu followed closely behind me, probably wanting to be there while May and I made sense of what was going on.

When I made it to my room, I saw that May was fiddling with my chest of jewelry, though I had strictly told her not to touch anything.

I didn't really care so much about her getting her hands on my things... the problem was that my shelves had many secret documents on them. If someone walked in while she was looking at those, that wouldn't help my cause to make her look less suspicious than she already was.

"I told you not to touch anything," I said to her in her own language.

She looked surprised when she saw me, but went straight to yelling at me. "Why would you leave me here alone! Where were you all this time?"

"I had to leave, May," I said. "The prayers are mandatory."

"Pray—" she cut herself off as she rushed towards me. "Never mind that... what am I *doing* here? How can *I* be here? This is *Ancient Egypt*."

"I know that," was my response. "And we need to figure out what to do now that you're here."

She gawked. "I'm in *Egypt*!" she repeated. "Freaking *Ancient Egypt*!"

I didn't understand what she accomplished by repeating such an obvious statement over and over again. Yes. I knew that she was in Ancient Egypt. She didn't need to tell me twice.

"And you..." she suddenly added. "You're the *King of freaking Egypt*."

I smirked at that, pleased that maybe now she would truly understand how serious of a thing that was. "That is true."

"I had no idea you were fluent in another language, my Pharaoh." Lord Hepu suddenly said, interrupting May while she continued to restate the already well-known fact.

"It was part of the curse," I said, returning to my own mother tongue. "The wizard allowed me to speak and understand this language. Except I could not read or write. It was supposed to make me feel like a peasant of our lands."

Lord Hepu raised his brows slightly. "He thought this curse out, didn't he?"

"Who is that?" May asked in English. She whispered it, as if she thought Lord Hepu wouldn't hear it. Though I didn't see why she needed to do that since he couldn't understand what she said anyways.

"He is one of my Royal Court Members. Lord Hepu, the High Priest of Amun." I said, speaking in English again.

This was complicated.

Changing languages constantly.

It wasn't like I could mix the two together. I had to switch completely from one language to another since neither of them could understand the other.

"A priest?" She looked at him with hesitation and nervousness.

"You have no reason to fear him," I said. "He is the kindest and calmest man in the court."

"My Pharaoh," Lord Hepu said, making me turn around. "If you don't mind..."

He surprised me by taking two fingers and touching my forehead, but it lasted for less than a second. He pulled his fingers away almost instantly and then bowed his head slightly before returning to his rather still stance with his hands clasped in front of him.

I narrowed my eyes for a moment, but then figured that there may have been something on my face.

Then I looked back at May, who shook her head and sighed loudly. "I can't be here," she said. "I *shouldn't* be here."

"I know," I responded.

Yes, I was thrilled that she was here. I *wanted* her to be here. But she did not belong here.

The wizard clearly had something sinister planned for the both of us. And her being here was probably helping his cause.

"What do you think my family is going to think?"

I opened my mouth to tell her that we'd figure it out, but Lord Hepu spoke first.

"If what our Pharaoh said was true and that you are from the future, then you have nothing to worry about when it comes to your family," he said. "Because logically... no one in your family has even been born yet."

I was about to nod, understanding what he said, but when I saw May gawking, it hit me.

He was speaking in English.

I looked at him, now understanding the forehead touch.

"You know English?" May asked.

Lord Hepu smiled warmly. "In your language, my skills are called magic, my dear."

It was strange that as soon as May could understand him, she looked as if she had warmed up to him.

I let out a breath.

Magic.

In her world it was hard to come by.

In mine it was literally at the fingertips of a man who I'd know since I was a child.

"I did not want to interrupt your reuniting, but I thought that maybe I could figure something out to help you be able to understand our language," Lord Hepu said to May. "It would be easier to transfer our language into you rather than your language into all of us."

"Can you really do that?" I asked.

"We can try to find a spell. I should be able to find a spell to help her speak and understand the language. However, I find that the wizard was quite the powerful sorcerer. It is simple to transfer knowledge into ones own mind, but transferring it to others is difficult. My magic will, at most, change her knowledge of her tongue into ours. Unlike this sorcerers magic, I cannot give her the knowledge of a brand new language on top of her own. She will have to lose her knowledge of her previous language."

"But could you revert the spell when needed?"

"I could."

"Then that's fine. Do it."

May looked hesitant, but didn't say anything otherwise.

"You two should meet me at the temple library when you are ready, in the meantime, I will look for the spell." Lord Hepu said.

I nodded. "That sounds good."

"Might I also suggest, my Pharaoh," Lord Hepu started, this time in our language, "that you call the Mother Queen and ask her to find the girl a more appropriate outfit. And of course, please make sure she washes herself up before she enters the temple."

I nodded again. "Yes, I will do that."

Lord Hepu bowed low before heading out, and once he left I did just that.

After ordering a guard to pass on the request to my mother, I returned to May in my room.

She sat on my bed and then bounced on it once. "These beds are more comfier than I imagined them to be, but your pillows are weird."

I looked over at our 'pillow,' which was more of a headrest. "Your pillows are weird." I countered.

She chuckled at that before sighing. "Atem... what is going on?"

I sat down next to her with a frown on my face. "I wish I could explain it to you... but I can't. I have no idea."

She pouted her lips.

"Do you know what happened to the wizard?" I asked.

Now she looked at me, "he just... I don't know. He hit me with something and suddenly I'm *here*. In Ancient *freaking* Egypt."

"Thankfully you came to me," I said. "I don't know what you would have done if you landed anywhere else in Egypt."

"I know... I was thinking about that when you were gone. It's so weird."

"It had to have something to do with your aunt's necklace," I said. "It was glowing and burning my skin when you arrived."

May hesitated and reached out to touch the necklace. After holding it in her palm for a moment, she pushed it aside and looked at the burn on my chest. "Ouch."

I let out a short laugh. "It doesn't hurt."

"How come it was never magical when I wore it?" May asked with a slight frown on her face.

"Your aunt did like me a lot, did she not? Maybe even more than you."

She elbowed me hard in the chest and I winced. But to be honest, I wasn't upset by her hitting me despite the fact that I had returned to being the King of 'freaking' Egypt as she called it. I was just glad she was okay and we were acting normal.

"Now that I think about it," she started, "the priest is right."

"Lord Hepu?"

She nodded. "My family isn't even alive yet. They won't be for another couple thousand years."

"Yes. But that's a good thing, right?"

Her shoulders rose as she shrugged. "Is it really safe for me to be here? What if my being here creates this crazy physics related domino effect thing that results in the future being completely different?"

I narrowed my eyes, not comprehending. "What?"

She suddenly let out a breath as if she just realized something. "Wait... you being here means you're going to save Egypt—"

"Of course."

"Which means Egypt isn't going to fall."

"Yes."

"But... if Egypt doesn't fall than history will change... what does that mean for the future?"

I thought about that. It was such a complicated situation that it needed a lot of thinking.

She was right.

What *would* my altering of the past do to the future?

But before I could answer I heard my mother's voice. "My son?" She called from outside my room.

"Come in, mother," I said in my language.

She walked into the room holding many folded linens in her arms and almost immediately, May stood up.

It was obvious that May was still in a state of confusion since the situation in the court room which resulted in my mother, along with the rest of the court, bowing low for her.

I couldn't blame her though. May was an avid reader and though she never lived in a society where bowing was an actual thing... I'm sure she knew that people only bowed for people they really respected.

"I have brought some dresses. They may be a little bit large for her but I can have them adjusted in a matter of seconds."

I nodded as I stood up too, walking over to her. "I'd like to see them."

My mother placed the stack of four dresses onto my desk before I lifted the first one up.

"No. She won't wear this," I said.

My mother's jaw dropped, "Why ever not? It's beautiful. All the young girls love these kinds of outfits"

It *was* a nice dress. But it was almost entirely see through. "Do you see her, mother?" I asked. "Her culture and lands have molded her to prefer more covered up attire."

My mother looked over at May, examining her blue jeans and pink shirt and then let out a short laugh. "She will die of heat in something so full, my son."

"Well, do you have any thin fabrics that just aren't see through?" I was sure that May could deal with thin fabric at the very least.

She nodded before pushing aside the top dress and pulling out the one underneath it.

"This is the best I can do, my Pharaoh," she said. "If she does not like this as well you must wait for some time for me to get something made specifically for her."

I looked at the outfit before taking it from her and turning to May. "How is this?" I asked in English.

She let out a breath. "It's pretty," she said. "But why's the fabric so thin?"

"Do you want to die of a heatstroke?" I asked as I examined the beads of sweat on her forehead. "You will be extremely uncomfortable walking around in your jeans and shirt any longer."

May pouted her lips. "Can I still wear my underwear underneath?"

I rolled my eyes but nodded. No one else here wore those but I guess if it would satisfy her then why not. "It's either this, May or you can wear what my mother is wearing."

She looked at my mother, taking note of her thin white dress that covered her entire body and the large blue shawl like cape that draped her shoulders. Since May wanted most of her womanly parts covered, this was her best bet.

May shook her head. "I'll take this, I don't think I can rock a cape like your mom

can."

I smiled. "Then I will leave you here with my mother. She will help you change and get dressed."

"Alone?" May asked quickly with worry in her eyes.

"No, not alone. With my mother."

She hesitated.

"I'll get you something to eat."

"Fine."

And with that, I gave my mother a nod and headed off to the kitchen in the hopes that they had some food ready.

It didn't take me too long. The kitchen maids at my palace were always very friendly and very on top of their work. Never in my entire life had I ever had any issues with them. Even though they were still in the process of cooking the meals, they provided with a plate of delicious food as fast as they could. And when I said delicious foods, I meant it. I had to admit that I picked a couple off the plate as I returned to my room.

My mother was finished getting May ready when I returned and I was surprised to see that May did look very nice in the outfit.

The dress framed May's body quite well and my mother also decorated her with some simple, yet lovely jewelry. When I placed the food on the desk, my mother finished off the eyeliner on May and then looked over at me. "What do you think? Beautiful, no? I gave her a little wash and put some scented oils on her skin too."

I nodded as I walked over to them, noticing that May's skin was glistening slightly because of the oil. "Are you done, mother?" I asked. "I told Lord Hepu that I would meet him in the temple library once she's ready."

"I'm finished. But what are you meeting him for?"

"He said he might be able to find a spell that could help May communicate in our language."

"That would be convenient," she said with a smile. "Then I will leave you to it. I will be seeing you for lunch, yes?"

I nodded.

"Good," She said as she, for some reason, took my hand and squeezed it before walking off.

"The oil your mom put on me feels fantastic," she said as soon as my mother left the room. "It was kind of awkward because she practically ripped my clothes off... I think she may have asked me for permission but I couldn't understand her—"

"She said something to you?" I asked, curiously.

"Well, no. She said something, then preceded to take off my clothes which was super weird. Then she wiped down my body with a cold and wet towel from there—" she pointed at the room that I would call a washroom, "—then she put this awesome oil stuff on. It smells nice too! How do I look?" May asked as she ended her blabbering. She spun around and the dress flared out slightly as she did.

"Good," I said, honestly. "This is much better than what you wore on Halloween."

May gave me a surprised look before she looked down at her outfit. "It is really different... isn't it?"

I reached out and touched the soft linen. The quality of this fabric was so great that any other woman would have been so joyous if I had simply given this dress to them. And here was May, not understanding that at all.

"You can see my bra, can't you?" She asked suddenly, covering her chest.

I rolled my eyes, but she was right, you could see the outline of May's very dark red bra. "You have nothing to worry about. Women here sometimes walk around with nothing over their chests. Stop being so self conscious."

"Jerk."

"Come, let's not waste time. Eat quickly because we need to hurry and go see Lord Hepu."

May did exactly as I said. She gobbled down all the food and it was only now that I realized that she must have been very hungry.

After that, I took her hand and guided her to the temple. As I thought about it now, I was glad my mother helped May clean herself up since it was mandatory to be clean before you entered the temple, even if you weren't entering the sacred part of it.

"Your mom's really nice, you know," May said to me as she looked around at everything her eyes could see in the palace while we walked through.

"How do you know that? You can't understand her." I said it as a joke. My mother *was* very kind, everyone knew that.

"I can just tell. She has a really nice smile."

Right then, we exited the palace and I felt a pull as May stopped walking.

"What is it?" I asked.

She just gawked.

I looked around and almost immediately figured how shocking it would be to see a sight like this after spending your entire life living in the kind of place that she lived in.

"This is nothing..." she started, "nothing like what I imagined it would be."

"What did you imagine?" I asked, giving her the time she needed to gawk.

"Sand... just lots of sand."

I smiled.

No... my lands were nothing like that. Egypt *did* have a lot of sand. I mean, of course it did. It was in a dessert after all. But it was never *just* sand. Most of my

people lived in the Nile Valley which was filled with beautiful colours. The blue of the river, the green of the crops, beautiful flowers... and much more. Egypt was much more than sand, as May had initially thought.

And the sight of the land just outside my palace was also something else. Just outside my palace was a massive garden filled with flowers and statues. There was even a small manmade lake from where most of the palace water came from.

It was beautiful, yes.

"If only Uncle Ethan and Aunty Maya could see this," she said to herself.

I smiled, but then pulled her. "Come, we have to hurry. We shouldn't keep Lord Hepu waiting for too long."

May had to shake her head slightly before muttering to herself again that she was in "ancient freaking Egypt." But then she followed me.

The walk to the temple was not long at all. It would have probably been about the same amount of time that it took May to walk to Aurora's house. Even still, normally I would have probably taken a chariot there for the sake of saving time. But I had a feeling that May wouldn't do so well on a chariot.

Plus, I didn't want May to make a complete fool out of herself since I was never exactly left alone when I left the palace. There were always about four guards who followed me around and they were doing the same thing right now. The walked a safe distance behind May and I, keeping a close eye on us to make sure I was safe.

But anyways, the walk shouldn't have taken much time, but what made this time around long was May's constant gawking at the surroundings.

She pointed at the temple over and over again and wouldn't stop saying that she wanted her uncle and aunt to be here to see this.

I was pleased that she found it all so beautiful, but it was just slightly annoying.

However, I couldn't be so harsh. When I thought about it, I realized that I must have done the same thing when I first came to her lands.

The temples of Egypt *were* beautiful, especially the ones in the bigger cities like my own. They had massive gates covered in art and absolutely beautiful architecture. I had never seen anything that could match up to the beauty of an Egyptian temple in May's world.

What was upsetting, however, about the representations of Egyptian temples in May's world was that all the paint had come off. The temples that May had seen pictures off were a plain sand colour and the art just looked like wall carvings. I guess that's what happens after thousands of years.

Here however, the walls were covered in vibrant colours, so much so that May couldn't say anything. All she did was gawk.

When the gawking was finally minimal enough to allow for us to make our way into the temple, we greeted Lord Hepu in the library.

"Your timing was perfect, my Pharaoh," he said in his newly learned English as he bowed. "I just found the scroll."

Well, I guess it was a good thing that May felt the need to be mesmerized by the scenery of my nation. If she hadn't, we probably would have had to wait *in* the temple.

I watched as Lord Hepu pulled out two scrolls from one of the many shelves of papyrus scrolls in the library. He unrolled the first scroll onto a table and looked at it. "This is the first part of the spell," he said as he ran his finger of the cursive hieroglyphs. "The second part is in the other scroll. It's much simpler than I imagined it to be, however I still must warn you that you will lose any previous knowledge of your mother tongue until the spell is reverted."

May hesitated but nodded. "I guess I wouldn't need English here anyways."

I nodded in agreement. "Yes. I don't believe that language was even created at this time."

"The sorcerer who cursed you was indeed a powerful one. I came across some odd spells while looking for these and it's obvious that any sort of time bending takes a great deal of skill."

"He could possess people too." I said, remembering Julian and the supposed

possession of the driver that killed May's aunt.

"Hmm," the wizard thought for a moment. "He must have been extracting his power from some outside source. No human could have that level of strength."

"I don't think he was human," May said before she shuddered. "His eyes would glow red... it was creepy."

Lord Hepu looked surprised by this. "Red eyes?"

Both May and I nodded.

"Well," he said with a smirk. "that explains everything."

"What?" I asked. "What explains everything?"

"A sorcerer with red eyes who is using his magic for evil. He is clearly an Egyptian who made a sinister deal with an evil spirit."

"Really?"

Lord Hepu nodded, pulling another scroll from one of the nearby shelves. When he walked back, he placed that scroll on the table and unrolled it as well. On it were more hieroglyphs that further explained what he was talking about. "We've experienced this multiple times... yet, never someone who is so powerful enough to bend time. He must have previously had some impressive capabilities."

"If he were to appear, do you know what could be done to defeat him?"

"The sure way to defeat a being who has made an evil deal with evil spirits is to kill them, unfortunately," Lord Hepu said. "However, what you mentioned about the young lady's world not having much magic... that fact is probably why it took the sorcerer so long to retaliate."

"He needs magic to do his stuff?" May asked.

Lord Hepu nodded. "Magic is everywhere," he started, "at least, as long as there is enough spiritual energy to create it. I am assuming that in your time you are lacking in magicians and sorcerers and witches or people of the sort, which is why your world is so lacking in magic."

May nodded. "I guess that makes sense."

"Our world... our land is filled with magic because almost everyone uses magic to some extent. Let it be to entertain a crowd or to heal the wounded, people with skill can invoke magic when needed," he said. "And aside from the lack of magic which may have inhibited him... I am assuming that the actual curse he put on you took a *lot* of power, which adds to the fact that it took him so long to send you back to Egypt even though he knew his plan to make you miserable had failed."

"When he was attacking us," May said to Lord Hepu, "I noticed that every time he used an attack he got physically weaker. Like, he was turning old."

"Mhmm," Lord Hepu nodded as if he completely understood what was going on. "Very good," he said. "It is very convenient that you noticed that. That is an exact feature of a deal with an evil spirit. It drains out ones life and energy. Sending the Pharaoh back to Egypt must have been crippling for him... which probably explains why you came a day after the Pharaoh arrived."

I nodded my head.

So that explained it. "He is probably way too weak to do anything now."

"The last time he bent time, it took him a year to come back... do you think the same will happen this time around? It'll take a year for him to make another appearance?" May asked nervously.

"I believe so, my dear," Lord Hepu said. "You may be stuck with us for longer than you expected."

She smiled worriedly at him before looking at me.

"Something strange, however, is that you said you had literally no access to magic," he suddenly said.

"We didn't," was my response.

Lord Hepu reached out and touched the ankh necklace around my neck. "I can sense the magic coming from this. Not too strong of a magic, but a magic strong enough to provide some sort of protection."

May's eyes widened. "So it *is* magical? Like, for sure?"

"Very much so."

"Wow!" She smiled. "Aunty Maya is awesome!"

Lord Hepu pulled his hand back and smiled. "Now, why don't we carry on with teaching the young lady our language."

May looked back at him right before he handed her a blue scarab beetle amulet. "Hold this against your chest with your left hand and give me your right hand."

She placed the scarab against her chest and held out her right hand.

Lord Hepu took a paint brush and drew some hieroglyphs along with some images onto her arm. "I'm sorry, I'm assuming you only recently cleaned yourself up."

"It's fine," May said.

Lord Hepu smiled before he held his hands out in front of him and began chanting some sort of incantation with his eyes closed.

There were no lights, no sparkles, no crazy things that happened like how movies and TV shows displayed magic in May's world.

After a moment of silence, Lord Hepu opened his eyes and May just stared at him.

"Finished," Lord Hepu said.

May hesitated. "What do you mean? I don't feel anything different. I don't think it worked!"

I started to smile.

She had said that entire thing in my language... so it had *definitely* worked.

I think things here were going to get very interesting now.

Chapter 37 - [Beauty and Ancient Freaking Egypt]

So I was in Ancient freaking Egypt. I still hadn't wrapped my head around the entire thing, but whatever the case... I was in Ancient Egypt.

It was absolutely nothing like I imagined it to be... but at the same time, absolutely everything I had imagined it to be. Yeah, that made no sense. But none of this did.

After all, I was in Ancient Egypt for crying out loud.

Whether this was all a dream or not... this place was glorious. It was absolutely stunning.

Not one image I had seen in a history book about Ancient Egypt could ever compare to how it really looked now that I was here.

For starters, none of the temples you see in those books have any sort of colour on their walls. But here... the walls were so colorful, filled with vibrant paints and beautiful images.

There was, of course, *a lot* of sand. But there was also a lot of gardens and water and rich, beautiful soil.

Then there was Atem's palace. It was *huge*. I really had no idea how he could start off in something so massive and then live in my tiny apartment for a year. It was crazy!

It was, for the most part, a maze.

I don't think I'd ever be able to find my way around this place on my own. There were many long, large and wide halls and many doors. Many of the halls that I

had seen had no ceilings. They opened up to the sky and let in fresh air. And of course, there were a ton of columns everywhere... big, beautiful colorful columns.

And of course, the people were beautiful too.

For the most part, they had tanned skin and beautifully lined dark eyes. Most of the people in the palace wore a lot of jewelry and very fancy clothes.

The only exception was Lord Hepu. He kind of seemed like a simple guy. He wore a white kilt, gold wristbands, and leopard skin over his shoulders like a shawl. Plus, he was bald, wore some eyeliner and that was about it.

But anyways, Lord Hepu seemed the nicest. (Did I mention how weird it felt to call someone 'Lord?') Of course, Atem's mother was also really nice.

I mean, I couldn't communicate with her at all but just from the way she looked at me, I could tell she was nice. It also seemed like she liked me, which was fantastic.

Plus, the dress she picked for me was really nice. It was comfortable and I didn't feel hot in it... though I did wish that it was a little bit thicker. Every time I looked down I could totally see my bra peeking through. That was weird.

After doing whatever magic he needed to do to make me understand Egyptian, all three of us left the temple together. I felt like nothing had changed. I didn't see any sparkles or shines or anything. But Atem assured me that he was speaking in his language, and if I could understand him then that means it worked.

Both Atem and Lord Hepu were continuing their conversation on the fact that the wizard was probably a troubled Egyptian man. They were now discussing whether or not the Sea People's attack was orchestrated by the wizard as well.

All I really understood from their conversation was that they did, in fact, believe the wizard had something to do with the Sea People. But other than that, I could really focus on them. I was too busy trying not to fall behind as I marveled at the beauty of this place.

I only stopped to look at the two men when Atem suddenly grabbed my arm.

"You're going to come with us," he said firmly.

I hesitated, not really knowing why he was being so randomly aggressive.

"Okay."

"The Pharaoh would like to properly introduce you to the other court members," Lord Hepu clarified kindly.

"Oh..." I started, "why?"

"Because your last entrance was rather unusual."

Okay, yeah. I guess that made sense.

But I was suddenly really nervous.

I always hated being the center of attention. However, Atem wouldn't let go of my hand. So I was forced to follow him down to the throne room.

When we arrived, everyone was already there, discussing something. They immediately silenced when we arrived, making me more nervous.

Atem's mother, who was standing near the throne, smiled at me though, and that made me feel a little better.

"Did the spell work?" Atem's mother asked. Her voice was soft and sweet and kind. Her voice was exactly what you'd imagine a mother's voice to be like... and her voice kind of reminded me of Aunt Maya.

And I understood it.

It was only then that I really completely believed the whole magic language-learning thing.

"It did," Atem said as he walked to his massive throne, still pulling me. "She can completely understand you."

His mother's smile grew. "Oh, that's wonderful," she said. "I was wondering how we would all get to know one another if she could not understand us." She then turned to Lord Hepu, "well done, my Lord."

Lord Hepu bowed.

Atem only let go of my hand when he reached the throne. And then the loser sat down.

I stared at him.

I was about to ask him what the hell I was supposed to do but I felt warm hands on my shoulders as Atem's mother forced me to sit down right next to him.

It was a big enough chair for the both of us. In fact, three people could probably sit there. But for some reason, I didn't think I was supposed to be sitting there.

"Don't be shy, my dear," his mother said. "Have a seat."

At this point, I was already sitting down and when I looked out at the court members, there was shock on their faces.

Even Atem looked kinda surprised.

Great.

"Are you sure—"

"It's fine," Atem said as he made space for me.

I swallowed back my nervousness, not really knowing what to do or say now that I was seated. I mean, Atem's mother wasn't even sitting.

"Alright," Atem suddenly said, "let's stop wasting time and get this over with."

When I looked at him, I saw him gesturing at me. "I want to properly introduce this girl. Her name is Mayaleena Khan. Everyone calls her May for short."

There was a pause, so I took this moment to look at his staff, or whatever they were called as a group, and wave. "Hi," I tried to give them the friendliest smile I could conjure up so that they would trust me.

The men and women who stood not too far away from us smiled and nodded. All except the big, buff guy who had a solid, serious look on his face.

"The man over here, May," Atem started as he now gestured to the man standing closest to us on our right, "is Lord Ahmose. He is my vizier."

I knew what a vizier was. Atem had explained that to me when I was taking that Ancient Egyptian course at school. He was like... the right hand man of the Pharaoh.

Lord Ahmose looked friendly, but there was a tinge of nervousness in his expression too. For some reason, however, that nervousness made me feel like I could trust him. He looked like a kind man who worried for his king.

"Beside him is Lady Hema and she is in charge of foreign affairs."

She was pretty. *Very* pretty. She had this dark brown skin that looked practically flawless and glowing.

Deep down, I hoped she was friendly. I would love to get skincare advice from her.

"You already know Lord Hepu. But in case you missed it, he's the High Priest of Amun. Chief of Religious affairs. He was appointed by my father and continues to maintain his position."

I smiled at Lord Hepu, who was already my friend, and he smiled back warmly. I liked Lord Hepu. He was cool.

"The old lady over there is Lady Taka," he started.

I looked at him in shock, surprised that he called her an 'old lady' in such a disrespectful tone.

But Atem continued, ignoring my shock. "She does not exactly have a specific role aside from finalizing any decisions made by the court."

Despite me being surprised by Atem calling her old... *she was* old. She was one of those old ladies who were constantly frowning. However, though she had a frown, something about her didn't make me think she was mean.

She nodded her head at me after she was introduced, and I smiled back. I usually got along with old people (aside from my own grandfather, of course), so I had a

feeling I would get along with her.

"And last but not least, we have Lord Renefer," Atem gestured at the big buff guy standing at the far left. "He's the commander in chief of our military."

Well, no wonder he looked terrifying.

Unlike the other's, Lord Renefer didn't really look so welcoming. But I guess, now that I knew what his job was, I understood why.

"Oh yes," Atem continued. "And then there's my mother. The dowager queen or mother queen, she has multiple titles."

Atem's mother, as always, gave me a kind smile.

"And all these people together form Egypt's Royal Court," Atem said. "The entire court itself is much larger, with a total of fifty people. However, the Royal Court Members are my closest and most trusted advisors. All of the decisions are made here, by these people and myself. These are the *most* important people in Egypt."

I nodded. "Well," I started, awkwardly. "It's nice to meet all of you."

Atem let out a short laugh before taking a looking back at the most important people in Egypt. "Now, let's not waste any time and get straight to business. Lord Renefer, how are things looking with the war preparations? Will we be able to set sail on time?"

I looked at Atem in shock. *War?*

"Yes, my Pharaoh," Lord Renefer said. "We will be able to depart for Memphis tomorrow right at sunset. I believe notice must have reached your brother by now and he should be preparing for your arrival."

"Good," Atem said.

"I find that there seems to be no reason to worry at all, my King. If the People of the Sea are truly invading, then we are many steps ahead of them."

Oh yeah... I thought. There was that whole issue with the Sea People.

Egypt was going to go to war with them?

I felt a rush of nervousness fill me.

The court members then started to discuss specific details of this war that they were talking about. All I really understood was the recitation of horse numbers and people numbers. Nothing else made sense to me.

After a couple minutes of them discussing that while I stared blankly in confusion, Lord Ahmose spoke up.

"My Pharaoh, I have another pressing topic that I was hoping to discuss," Lord Ahmose said.

Atem looked at him.

"The topic of your ma—"

"How about we discuss that later," Atem said quickly, interrupting him. "It's not that important."

I was surprised by Atem's rude interruption, but Lord Ahmose did not look offended. He just nodded and said, "yes, my Pharaoh."

"My Pharaoh," his mother suddenly called.

Now Atem looked at her.

"How about I take May for now and give her a tour of the palace," she said.

"There is no use for her to stay here and maybe a tour of the palace will make her more comfortable."

I kind of felt like I just got here, but to be honest, I did want to go with her. It felt awkward sitting here as everyone was staring at me. Besides, I'd love to get to see the palace... the place Atem was raised.

Atem looked at me, "do you want to go?"

I nodded, "sure!"

"Alright," Atem said. "I will come find you after the evening prayers."

His mother smiled as she took my hand. When I stood up, I waved at Atem who nodded his head, and then his mother linked her arm in mine and guided me out of the throne room.

The guards opened the massive double throne room doors and let us out, and as soon as we walked out, they closed the doors again.

Just outside were about six young women, all of whom rushed over to the queen when they saw her.

I was a little surprised.

"They are my attendants," the queen said to me, probably noticing my confusion.

"Oh," I said.

The girls followed closely behind Atem's mother and I as she led me away from the throne room.

And it was moments after that it hit me...

I was chilling with a queen.

A queen.

Not just any queen... but my boyfriends' *mom*.

Gosh was this weird.

"A tour will take quite some time," his mother suddenly said. "But I think you will enjoy it. There is a lot to see here in this palace. A lot of beautiful things."

I chuckled awkwardly.

I think she understood that I was nervous because she seemed to be trying to make me feel comfortable. And the thought that she was doing that was enough to make me feel better.

So during the entire tour of the beautiful palace, she talked and talked and told me as much as she could about everything.

My favourite thing to hear was when she told me about Atem. Like when we walked past a training field and she told me that Atem and his brother would chase each other around here when they were little boys and get into a lot of trouble because they weren't allowed to be there.

And when we walked past a ladder that led up the thick palace walls and she told me that Atem and his father would sit up there and look at stars before he went to bed.

All these stories were wonderful. They made me remember that this place was Atem's *home*. What was strange was that I always imagined it to be so scary and ugly and dark and dingy... maybe it was because that whenever Atem talked about his past, he always talked about the bad things.

Like the betrayals.

And the deaths.

And the pain.

But... he *did* have some good times. And the thought of that made me very happy.

The last stop of the tour was the palace gardens.

It was a massive garden filled with beautiful flowers and even a small, artificial lake.

There were small benches everywhere and though it was getting dark out, there were a bunch of pretty much naked children running around, playing.

The queen sat down at one of the benches before looking at her attendants. "You girls can all go enjoy yourselves for the rest of the evening."

"Are you sure, my queen?" One woman asked.

"Is there nothing else you would like for us to do for you?" Another asked.

"Nothing, my dears. Please, go rest."

The six women bowed low before doing exactly what their queen said.

As they left, I looked around at the beautiful garden. It blew my mind to think that this was in Atem's backyard. My four or five flowerpots paled in comparison to this garden.

"It's beautiful, is it not?"

I nodded, looking back at the queen.

She was so pretty. She had lovely tan skin with only a hint of wrinkles to give away her age. Other than that she had these soft features and kind, dark eyes.

I could tell now that I was looking at her closely that both Atem and her shared the same eye shape... yet her eyes were so kind and friendly looking whereas his were so much more frightening.

I didn't even get how that was possible.

I hadn't talked much to her during the tour. It mostly consisted of her talking and me listening.

"My late husband had this made for me," she said.

"Really?" I asked in shock. How romantic.

She chuckled. "I love flowers. A lot. Prior to becoming his wife, I had a small garden in front of my home up in Memphis. I never really told him I liked flowers, but I would sit in my garden all the time and every time he came to see me he would catch me tending to my flowers."

I smiled.

"This garden was a wedding gift... I loved him dearly but after we were married I was nervous of leaving my parents and my home and coming to live here. He had this made to make me feel less home sick."

"That's so sweet," I smiled as I sat down next to her on the bench. "He seems like such a good man. Atem only said good things about him too."

"*Atem*?" The Queen smiled as she said it. "You call him Atem?"

I immediately got nervous.

"He *let* you call him Atem?"

"Yes..."

Her smile grew. "That was the name only his father used. After he passed away my son allowed no one to say it."

I let out a breath, "really?"

She nodded. "Akhenatem loved his father dearly. His early demise shattered my son... It started the change that would eventually lead to..."

She didn't say it, but I knew exactly what she was talking about.

His cruelty.

"It did not help that his step-mother was traitorous," the Queen said. "Though I do not believe his behaviour was righteous... I do believe that he had a rough and difficult life that led to that behaviour."

"I agree," I said. "And it's not too late for him to make things right."

The Queen smiled at me. She then stayed silent for a moment before she spoke again. "I do not know what you did to him... but you saved his life, and I am forever indebted to you."

I felt my cheeks warm up a bit. "I didn't do much—"

"Please," she started, "we had tried for years and years to help him but nothing we did ever worked. Yet you managed to change him in a year. How did you do it?"

"I wish I could tell you," I said. "But I really don't know. He was really mean when I first met him. Like, *really* mean. But as time went on he just started to change. Maybe he just needed to get away... maybe some time away from all of this was what he needed." Maybe it had nothing to do with *me*.

She looked down at her hands and then after a moment, back at me. "Did he tell you?" She asked. "About what happened?"

"Not much, but enough for me to get it."

She sighed. "He's a good man."

"I know."

She watched me for a long moment after that without saying anything.

It was really weird, and I started to get nervous. But when she spoke, my heart skipped a beat.

"I have never seen my son look at someone the way he looks at you."

My eyes widened.

"He's in love with you. Really. I know it."

I was about to let out a laugh to hide my embarrassment because of what she was saying, but before I could I heard Atem's voice.

"Mother. May," I heard him call.

Both his mother and I turned around and saw Atem and Lord Ahmose walking towards us.

"You've finished with your prayer's, my son?"

Atem nodded before looking at me, "how was the tour?"

"Good," I smiled. "This place is beautiful."

"I should get going for my prayers too," Atem's mother said. "I don't want to be too late."

I smiled at her. "Thank you for the tour. It was wonderful."

She took my hand in hers and kissed it. "I am glad. Sleep well, my dear."

"I will come with you, my Queen," Lord Ahmose said.

Atem's mother nodded before smiling at her son and turning around. Before Lord Ahmose followed her off, I noticed him exchange a strange look with Atem.

Before we headed back to Atem's room, he took me to the dining room and got me something to eat. He didn't say much to me, but I assumed it was because he had a lot on his mind.

Like war.

After eating, I followed behind Atem down the halls of his palace. I kept telling myself not to ask him any questions about this upcoming war, knowing that I'd probably stress him out more.

But I couldn't help it.

"Hey, 'Tem... are you going to be fighting too?"

"Of course I am, I'm the Pharaoh."

I felt my heart sink. "But isn't it going to be dangerous?"

"Yes, it is."

"What if something happens to you?"

"Then that's what was meant to be."

I pouted my lips.

He was such a jerk.

He could at least *try* to make me feel better.

But as I continued to count all the reasons he was a jerk in my head, I hadn't realized that he had stopped walking.

I bumped right into his bare back, stumbling backwards and almost falling over. "Jeeze, Atem! What gives?"

He stood there for a moment before he turned around to face me. He looked at me and then let out a laugh and looked away.

"*What?*" I asked, immediately thinking he was making fun of me for something. What it was, however, I had no idea.

When he looked back at me, he suddenly looked serious.

"What?" I repeated.

He took a breath.

Let it out.

He took another deep breath, let it out, straightened his back and looked down at me. "I want you to marry me."

I stared at him and after a second I started to laugh.

But when I saw the seriousness on his face, my laugh faded.

"*What?*"

Hey everyone!!

I hope you enjoyed this chapter!!!! ;D Sorry for the late upload, it was exam time and I'm finally done! WOOHOO! (of course, the next round will be coming soon xD) Thanks as always for your patience!!

I will have another upload up very soon for you guys to enjoy! I know this chapter was kind of a cliffhanger so I won't leave you hanging for too long ;D!

If you liked it, please don't forget to Vote and Follow!!! Also, please let me know what you think in the comments! <3

THANK YOU!!!!

Love,

Luckycharms <3



Chapter 38 - [Beauty and the Marriage Proposal]

I stared at him in shock for a good few minutes. I think he was pretty freaked out too because he also didn't say a word the entire time.

"What?" I repeated.

Atem rolled his eyes. "Why are y—" He cut himself off, looking annoyed but probably not wanting to say something inappropriate in this situation. "I asked you to marry me."

I scoffed. "Are you serious?"

"Of course I'm serious," he said. "Do you think I would ask you this as a joke?"

"Why *would* you ask me this?"

Atem let out a breath. "It has become clear that I need to get married in order to consolidate my position on the throne. I need to make everyone believe that I have the possibility of an heir being on his or her way."

"Like a kid?" First marriage, now children?

"Yes," he said. "A kid. The nobles are not going to invest in me if they feel like my dynasty and myself have no future. And because of the rush of the current situation, my court needs their investment and support if we want to be able to properly fund and push through a proper military campaign. So I have two options," he said. "My first is that I marry you. My second is I marry another, high classed Egyptian girl."

I narrowed my eyes.

"Frankly, I'd prefer to marry you than some other, annoying girl."

"What does that even mean?" I asked.

"What does what mean?"

"What does... marrying you even mean?" I asked. "I'm only nineteen! I can't--"

"Well, in Egypt, being unmarried and nineteen is actually old."

"Atem."

"What."

"You just asked me to marry you," I said. "Do you know how big of a deal that is?"

"Yes," he confirmed. "I know that."

"You're not serious," I said as I began to walk past him, as if I knew where I was going.

Atem grabbed my arm before I could go anywhere. "I *am* serious, May."

I could tell by the seriousness on his face that he *was* being serious. But I didn't want to believe it.

He was asking me to *marry* him? That's *crazy*. "We've only known each other for a year."

"Some people get married as strangers," he said. "I think a year is more than enough time."

I stared at him, stunned.

He *was* serious.

He started walking, pulling me with him and making me realize that I would have gone the wrong way if I continued off on my own. "The ceremony will not be big. It will be in the temple with the only the court and a few noblemen and

women—"

"Are you—"

"We have no time to for a grand wedding. I am departing for Memphis tomorrow night—"

I pulled my hand away, stopping in my tracks. "Hold on, hold on, hold on!" I scoffed and held my hands up, stopping him from talking. "If I were to say yes... we would get married *tomorrow*?"

Atem blinked. "Yes."

"*Tomorrow*!"

"Yes. At noon."

I widened my eyes and looked up at the ceiling. "Atem, you're crazy!"

He started walking again and turned the corner. "News of my marriage has already been passed on to the nobles of Egypt. There are five women who will be sent to my mother tomorrow morning. One of them will be chosen to be my wife if you say no."

"This is ridiculous!" I squeaked. "*Marriage*? That's out of the—"

Atem cut me off when he tightened his grip on my hand, stopped walking and pulled me in front of him. I stumbled a bit but when I recollected myself, I looked at him with a glare. I opened my mouth to argue but he spoke first.

"The Pharaoh of Egypt is asking you to marry him. The *least* you could do is be flattered."

I scoffed. "Flattered?" I asked. "You want me to be flattered? This isn't how I imagined a guy asking me to marry him!"

"What do you want me to do?" Atem asked as he raised his voice. "Get on my knees?"

Actually, that was exactly what I was expecting. Well... to get on *one* knee.

But that was besides the point.

"You're telling me you want to marry me so that you don't have to marry some other annoying girl! How is that flattering?"

Atem looked even more annoyed than he already was, but instead of arguing with me, he looked past me and said, "take her for a bath."

When I turned around, I was surprised to see four girls standing outside of what I recognized as Atem's room.

"Yes, my Pharaoh," one said as she bowed low. "We have left warm water for you inside your bathing room."

Atem nodded before looking back at me. "Think about it," he said. "And let me know what your final decision is when you're ready."

I let out a breath but he walked past me and into his room without another word. The four girls, who were definitely younger than me, rushed towards me. "This way, my Lady," one of the girls said as she guided me away from Atem's room.

"My Lady?" I asked, immediately.

Well, *that* was flattering. More flattering than what happened between Atem and I. But it made me feel weird.

"Just call me May."

"Of course, Lady May."

"No. Just May. Please."

The girls hesitated.

I let out a short laugh. "Don't you think I'm kind of young for the title, 'Lady?'"

The girls looked at each other awkwardly before smiling.

And then I remembered that nineteen was actually old here.

I sighed.

When we entered what I assumed was a bathroom, I realized that I was greatly in need of a bath. Especially *this* kind of bath.

The bathtub was this huge, round, wooden tub and in it was steaming water... and flower petals.

Flower petals.

I have never bathed with flower petals before. And the sight of this made me excited.

The only weird part was that these girls felt the need to help me out of my clothes and jewelry. I was totally capable of taking off my clothes and bathing on my own. But for some reason everyone thought they needed to help me.

Stripping down naked in front of people was already weird enough. Now helping me take a bath?

It was a little less weird with Atem's mom... I mean, she was an older woman and I kind of just imagined as if she was my mother.

But with these four girls, all of them probably either sixteen or seventeen... it was weird.

One girl pulled off my clothes while another took off my jewelry and another took off my makeup and the last combed my hair. All of them worked swiftly but at the same time, gently. They were definitely professionals.

"You have lovely breasts," the oldest looking girl who was helping me take off the eyeliner said.

I let out a breath and felt the need to cover my boobs. "*What?*" That wasn't exactly something I've heard someone say before.

"Yes," the girl who was now folding my dress said. "Very full and youthful."

My eyes widened. Was this normal? To compliment each other's boobs? "Thanks?" I said, awkwardly.

They smiled at me.

The girl brushing my hair spoke next, "and your hair is absolutely gorgeous! I cannot believe it's your natural hair!" She then giggled. "I keep pulling it to see if it will come out."

I laughed now. Atem had mentioned once that I had nice hair. "Is this how women normally bathe? With people helping them?"

"Not just women," the second girl who complimented my boobs said. "Men too, and only those of royalty."

Oh. So I was getting the royal treatment. Nice.

I guess that made this a little less awkward.

It was also nice to think that they weren't judging me as they did this.

"What about At—" I cut myself off, "I mean the Pharaoh. Does he get help bathing too?"

"No," said the girl who was now placing the jewelry I was wearing on a table. "The Pharaoh never liked anyone touching him. We prepare the hot water for him and he handles it all himself. He never even lets anyone give him massages."

That sounded like Atem.

"Alright, I am done combing," the girl behind me said.

"Right," the girl who first complimented my boobs said. "You can enter the bath now, my Lady— I mean, May."

I smiled before carefully, but quickly climbing up the four steps and then climbing back down into the bathtub. I sat down in the tub quickly, not wanting to be naked for everyone to see much longer.

But the water was fantastic.

Despite the already hot atmosphere of Egypt, a hot bath was still nice.

"What are all your names?" I asked.

The girl who complimented my boobs first and helped me take off my makeup spoke first. "I'm Kiki."

"And I'm Aat," said the second girl who complimented my breast.

The tall and thin girl who was brushing my hair spoke next. "My name is Nauni."

And the last girl, who seemed the youngest and was a cute kind of chubby, grinned at me as she spoke. "And my name is Siti"

Wow. Those were names that were all super easy to remember. "Nice to meet you all."

Nauni smiled before grabbing my arm and making me gasp, "so... if you don't mind me asking... is it true what they say about you?" She began to massage my arm, and I had to admit, it was really nice.

It helped me not freak out so much at the idea that people were gossiping about me.

"What do they say about me?" I asked, curiously.

"That you saved the Pharaoh!" Siti exclaimed, massaging my other arm.

"Oh... well..."

"What kind of question is that," Kiki said, firmly. "Of course she did. How else can you explain the Pharaoh's sudden kindness?"

"That's true," Aat added. "My father was released from prison... and my family was given geese and cattle as compensation! My family has never had such luxuries before, ever!"

"Your father was in prison?" I asked, feeling nervous. "Because of the Pharaoh?"

Aat nodded. "My father was one of the stablemen. A horse was stolen and the

nobleman who owned the horse blamed my father. So he was punished by the Pharaoh and thrown into prison, though we knew my father would never steal."

"Oh..."

"But now he is out. And he is thrilled. Thankfully, he didn't suffer much in prison. He said he was just lonely."

I smiled.

"Everyone is talking about how you, a foreign girl is the one who caused the Pharaoh to change," Kiki said. "Everyone who suffered once from the Pharaoh's wrath are very grateful to you."

I kept smiling. "I don't know how to explain it, but I didn't really do much."

"Of course you will be modest," Kiki smiled, dropping more petals into the water.

"So you two are getting married?" Siti suddenly asked.

"Siti!" The three other girls exclaimed together.

Siti pouted before lowering her head slowly, "sorry."

"No... it's alright," I said. "Don't worry. You don't have to be scared of me. I'm not a mean person or anything."

Siti looked a little relieved.

"I'm from a totally different place," I said, honestly. "And there... marriage isn't really a simple thing—"

"It's not a simple thing here, either!" Aat said, before sighing happily. "Girls are always excited to get married to the man of their dreams."

I laughed.

"Excuse us for eavesdropping," Kiki said, quickly.

"It's fine."

"But... if you'll allow me to share some advice?" She continued.

"Sure!"

"I think you should say yes."

I turned my head and looked at her. She was standing not too far away from the tub, mixing some sort of liquids together.

"Not because he's the Pharaoh... but because you sound like you are very comfortable with him," she turned to look at me. "Never in my life of serving here have I heard a single soul talk to the Pharaoh like you have. I was terrified for you when I heard you raise your voice. I thought he was going to rip your throat out. I thought we'd be cleaning your blood off the floor instead of the sand off of your skin. But instead, he was patient with you."

By the look on her face... I could tell she was very serious. And now I kind of felt bad. I probably must have scared them all if that's what they thought of Atem.

"And... for the Pharaoh to even ask you... he must *really* care about you," she continued. "The King has never accepted a single engagement offer. Ever. And he has gotten hundreds over the span of his life. And now he is *asking* you. He must feel something for you."

"I guess you're right," I said.

The other three girls nodded eagerly. "You seem very nice too," Siti said. "I'd love to serve you."

I smiled at her, "thanks!"

"But like the King requested for you to do, we hope that you will think about it," Kiki said. "We'll leave you alone to bathe for some time and you can think about his request. Call us when you are ready and we will come help you get dressed."

I was a little surprised by this, but I nodded and let them leave the room.

I sat quietly for a while with nothing at all going on in my mind. People

always said that you always do most of your thinking in the washroom... and I guess today I'd have to take advantage of that.

Atem had asked me to marry him.

To *marry* him.

I was nineteen years old. Marriage had not passed through my mind much at all! Sure I thought about it here and there... but not enough to be *okay* with actually going through with it *tomorrow*.

I loved Atem.

Of course I did.

If I didn't, I'd be balling my eyes out right now wanting to go home as fast as I could. Just the fact that I was sitting here, thinking about him over the fact that I didn't know whether I'd ever see my family and friends again, just proved that I loved him.

Though... I had never exactly properly told him that before. Which was totally weird since he's actually said it a couple times.

Anyways, whether I've said it or not, I loved him.

But the problem wasn't whether or not I loved him. The problem was this entire situation.

I hugged my legs as I thought about this.

He was asking me because he *needed* to ask me. Not because he *wanted* to. He told me, honestly, that he had to pick between me and five other women. Did I really want to get married because Atem *had* to do it?

And then there was the question of whether or not I was *ready* for marriage. In my mind, I was a *kid*!

I planned on graduating from university first. Then maybe getting a Masters Degree, and then maybe after a little bit of travelling I'd *consider* getting married.

Yet here I was. I had *just* finished my first year of university and I'm thinking about marriage.

Then there was that other thing...

That thing that I'd been pushing to the back of my mind since I got here.

The topic of whether or not I was ever going to go home.

Part of the issue was that accepting to marry him would be like accepting that I was never going to go home. Let's say I did marry him.

Maybe even got pregnant. (Ohmygod.)

Would it even be plausible for me to leave him and go home if I had a chance?

Marrying Atem meant giving him everything I had. *Everything*. That's what marriage was, right? I mean... that's what Auntie Maya taught me.

She told me that when you marry someone... they become a part of you. Like her and Uncle Ethan.

They were everything to each other. They loved each other unconditionally and made each other happy.

Divorce or separation was never even an option for the two of them. She always told me that if they disagreed on something, the *had* to work it out.

Was I ready for that?

I'd probably never see my family again. I'd never see my friends again.

Uncle Ethan, Grandma Seetha, Ro, Alec, Blake, my brother, my mom and Neferkiti... all of those people... I'd never see them again.

I felt myself start to tear up, but as I wiped my tears away, I realized that for all I knew, maybe even if I *didn't* marry Atem, I'd still never see them again.

Maybe Atem was all I had left.

I sniffled silently, knowing that the girls were just outside the door.

Gosh, could things get any more confusing?

But, by the end of crying silently to myself, I had figured out what I wanted to do.

The girls came running in when I called them and helped me out of the tub. They noted that my eyes were red but I told them it might have been from the hot water.

Then, they preceded to dry me up with a soft cloth that I assumed was a towel, though it didn't look like one. They had to use a couple of the towels to help me dry my hair, and though I offered to do it myself, they said no, adamant about doing it for me.

I realized immediately after that the liquids Kiki were mixing were oils, because she proceeded to rub my entire body with it. It felt nice and nothing like what I imagined the feeling of oil on my body to feel like.

It was thicker than what Atem's mother had put on my skin earlier that day, but not so thick that it was uncomfortable.

And then after that, I think they put some perfume on me.

Finally, they put on the clothes, which made me shudder a little in horror.

The fabric was so light that it felt like I was wearing *nothing*. I asked the girls if they had anything else for me to wear and they said no. They also added that this was the kind of nightdress all the women wore, or else they would sweat unbelievably in their sleep.

So I had to deal with it. And I guess I should just suck it up. Why was I so bothered by this? Everyone else dressed like this here? Whether they were fat or thin or tall or short or anything... people seemed pretty confident with their bodies.

So I took a deep breath and let the girls guide me back to Atem's room as I practiced what I was going to say to him.

When we got to his door, I smiled at the girls and said goodnight before opening his door. I wasn't going to knock... I didn't think I needed too.

But maybe I should have, seeing as the two guards standing on both sides of his door were rather taken aback.

They didn't say anything though, so I walked right in, closing the door behind me.

Atem was sitting at the edge of his bed, looking like he was thinking.

He looked up when he heard the door shut, and to my surprise he did a double take. I assumed it was because of what I was wearing, but I didn't care at that moment.

After taking a couple steps forward, yet still being maybe twenty big steps away from his bed, I lifted my hand up and started to twirl my hair with my finger. "I thought about it," I said, forcing myself to look him in the eyes.

He looked back at me, leaning back a little, as if to see me better.

Like this entire day, Atem was still shirtless. And I had to admit that it was kind of distracting. He *did* have a really nice body, after all. But I took a deep breath, reminding myself that now was not the time, and just let it out. "I'm not going to marry you unless you really mean it," I said, firmly. "If this is strictly a political thing or whatever you want to call it... I want you to ask Lord Hepu to do everything he can to help me go home. Then after I'm gone, you can go ahead and marry whoever you want."

He sat there, staring at me for a moment.

And then he stood up.

I stood frozen in my spot as he began walking slowly towards me. "Explain something to me, May," he started. "In your world, what does it mean to *date* someone?"

I hesitated, not getting why he was asking the question.

"Does dating someone not come with the belief of potentially marrying that

person in the future?" He asked. "Why else would people date each other?"

"Um—"

"Why did you decide you wanted to *date* me?" He asked as he reached me, "it couldn't have possibly been for sex, seeing as you're *still* a virgin. If not for that, and if not because maybe one day we would get married, then why?"

"Marriage was *not* something I was thinking about, Atem."

"Then *what*."

"I don't know..."

"You *don't* know?" He asked, a little angrily.

"Yeah!" I started to raise my voice. "I don't know! I liked you! And you've gotta cut me some slack! This is all so sudden!"

"And maybe *this* is exactly the problem, May," he said. "You told me once that relationships barely ever work out in your world... and maybe this is exactly why. Because you go into a relationship without the belief that there is a *future* for it."

Oh dear.

He was doing that thing again.

That thing where he said something completely correct about me, or my family, or my people that I didn't want to hear.

"You don't *understand*. Unlike you, May, I only let myself continue to have feelings for you because I thought that maybe there was a future for us. You were a kind of girl that I liked. Someone I wanted to be with."

"Atem..."

"And what was that you said? You would only consider it if I *meant* it?" He asked. "Do you know how long it took me to convince Lord Ahmose and the rest of the court to even *consider* you as a potential bride for me? Do you think I

would waste all that time... precious time I could have spent creating a plan for saving my country from an invasion... do you think I would do that if I didn't *mean* it?"

I let out a breath.

"Yes, there is an urgency in the request. Yes, it's true that the request may have had a political push to it. But that does not, in any way, mean that I didn't *mean* it. I asked you to marry me because I wanted *you* to be with me. I told you I loved you because I wanted *you* to be with me. How hard is that for you to comprehend?"

I stared at him, not knowing what to say.

"Now, let me ask you this again, May. But let me be more clear so you don't misunderstand me yet again," he looked me straight in the eyes, not blinking. "I have a country I need to save, thousands of women, men and children I need to save. The first step in doing so is for me to get married to someone who could potentially bare my children, tomorrow. There is no one in this world who I could think of as a potential bride aside from you. Not because you're less annoying and not because you're easier for me to deal with... but because I am in love with *you*."

My heart skipped a beat.

"You're the only girl I have ever loved and you are the only girl I have ever been comfortable with. I cannot imagine marrying anyone else. And for those reasons, May, will you or will you not marry me?"

I took a deep breath. "Okay," I said. "Fine."

He raised his eyebrows. "And you mean it?"

"Yes," I said, before hugging him.

What was with me? He was right when he said that I misunderstood him.

Despite being an evil Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, Atem has never done anything crazy to hurt me, aside from insult me here and there.

And here I was, always assuming he was going to hurt me... always assuming the worst.

He did *really* care about me. His mother was right. So was Kiki. Atem loved me. And I wasn't being very appreciative about the love he was giving me... the kind of love that I had never felt before.

I was being selfish, in a way.

"I'm sorry," I said as I tightened my hug. I tried to ignore the fact that thanks to the really thin clothing I could pretty much feel Atem's skin against mine. "I'm sorry if I upset you."

"Well you did," he said before sighing. He wrapped his arms around me and patted my head. "But it's fine."

I smiled before I looked up at him, "I just thought—"

"It's fine. Maybe I should have just been more clear." He kept hugging me, and I knew that he wasn't mad at me.

I stayed silent for a moment, but then asked the question that had been in the back of my mind for a while now. "Can you be honest with me, though?" I asked with my arms still around him. "What does this mean about me going home... will I ever be able to go home?"

Atem sighed again. "I asked Lord Hepu," he started. "He said that he himself has no way of bending time. He told me that he has no knowledge of a way to send you home."

I pouted my lips for a moment but wasn't surprised. "Alright," I started, trying not to be gloomy for now. I could deal with this truth later. Maybe after getting married and stopping the Sea People. "Am I your fiancée now?"

Atem rolled his eyes before lowering his head and kissing my lips. When he pulled away, he pushed my head back with his fingers before walking off. "The only thing you are is an idiot."

Normally I would have probably hit him or something along those lines, but I let it go this time around.

He returned to his bed, pulling the covers away so he could get in.

"Am I supposed to sleep there too?"

"Why?" he asked as he looked at me. "Do you want to sleep somewhere else?"

"No," I said quickly. "I'm just asking."

He looked at me for a moment before crossing his arms. "The outfit looks good on you."

"You mean lack there of?" I asked with a smile. I was a little surprised with myself for not being so awkward in the outfit. I kind of imagined that I would be constantly feeling self-conscious. But I wasn't.

I felt fine.

"At least it's comfortable," Atem suggested.

"Do you think it's better than the pajama's you got me from Victoria's Secret?" I asked as I climbed up into the surprisingly comfortable bed.

"Unfortunately yes. Victoria Secret fashion pales in comparison to Ancient Egyptian fashion."

I laughed as I got comfortable in the bed. Atem got comfortable right next to me and watched as I pushed the strange headrest thing aside. "How on earth do you sleep with this stuff?"

"It's comfortable, trust me."

I attempted to put my head on it, but it squeezed my ear and felt super weird. "No," I pushed it aside again. "I don't like it."

Atem rolled his eyes but let me do what I please. For a minute or so, I stared at the ceiling while Atem read something from a scroll.

"Did your court members really not like the idea of you asking me?"

"Not really," he confirmed. "Not because they didn't like you or anything. It's

because you are not Egyptian. And on top of that, they aren't completely sure they can trust you yet."

I sighed.

Atem put the scroll down and looked at me. "You're getting married to me tomorrow and that's what you're worried about?" He said before he laid down and pulled the covers over him.

"It doesn't really feel like I'm *actually* getting married to you," I said, honestly. And that was really the truth.

I mean, I was a little nervous, yes. But all of this kind of felt like it wasn't real. Maybe that was why I wasn't shocked or excited or doing the kinds of things brides-to-be usually did.

"Well you are," Atem said. "And once you are properly coronated, you will be the Queen of Egypt."

And now I froze.

My eyes widened as I looked at him.

I had *completely* missed that part.

"*What?*" I hissed as I sat up. "That's impossible!"

Atem put his arm over his eyes.

"Atem! I can't be a *queen*!"

"Too bad," he said. "You said yes already."

"No, no, no, no, *no*," I shook him as I said it. "Tell your mom to keep being the queen! I can't!"

"Don't worry about it."

"Atem!"

He groaned. "Shut up." He said before putting a hand behind my neck and

pulling me down on top of him.

He kissed my lips despite my initial protest. He couldn't get away with trying to get me to shut up this time.

I couldn't be a queen.

I was, in no way, prepared for something like that.

A queen?

C'mon! I just finished my first year of university!

I pulled away when I could and sat up, glaring at him. "How come you didn't mention that?"

"It was implied," he simply said.

"No it wasn't! I—"

He covered my mouth with his hand, not letting me speak. "Listen to me, May," He started. "Once all of this is over... the wedding, the battle with the People of the Sea, this whole mess with the wizard... once all of this is over, I will do what I have to do to keep you happy."

My eyebrows rose.

"Whether it means making sure you are comfortable or searching the entire earth for a way to get you to see the people you love again, I will do it. But for now, I need you to cooperate with me."

I was a little bit surprised by this, but at the same time, I wasn't. I knew he would do this for me, even though he hadn't ever said anything like this to me before.

"Will you do that for me?"

I let out a sigh, then smiled at him and nodded. "Okay," I said before I leaned over him and kissed his lips again. We just kissed for some time before he turned me around and got on top of me. When he put his hand on my waist, though I

was wearing a dress the thinness of the fabric made it feel like he was touching my skin.

And it felt nice.

When he kissed my neck and made my heart race like crazy... that was when it really hit me. I was going to marry this guy tomorrow.

It was sudden and weird and totally uncalled for...

But now I was a little excited.

No... a lot excited.

"Hey, 'Tem," I called.

He paused for the kissing to look at me. "What?"

"I don't think I've said this properly before... but I love you," I said. "I really do. A lot."

He just looked at me for a moment and then smiled. "I love you too, you annoying peasant girl."

I let out a laugh and kissed him again.

And again.

And again.

And by the end of the night, it wasn't just my clothes making it feel like his skin was against mine. It was *actually* his skin against mine.

Plus, what was great was that I didn't really go against what I believed in... what I had talked to Atem about not so long ago.

I was very comfortable with Atem.

I was also *completely* sober.

I didn't feel forced into it at all.

Of course, I also loved him.

Besides, I was going to be getting married to him tomorrow.

Therefore, there was nothing wrong with all the things that happened that night.

And boy, I had to say... it was *amazing*.

Hey all!!!

Now isn't that a great way to end a chapter ;)

And didn't I say I'd have another update for you soon? Hehe!

Hope you enjoyed the chapter! As always, please don't forget to vote and comment and follow!! All of your comments in the last chapter made me so happy!!!! I absolutely LOVE reading what you think!! I will definitely get around to responding to them soon! =D

So what do you think? Things have been pretty happy and positive recently in this story... do you think it's going to last very long?? xD

AND AS A SIDE NOTE! Wattpad recently started this multimedia thing which got me super excited!! I have this collection of photos that I send to my friends through Snapchat of my Figma Link (My precious little baby), and I decided to share it with you all! This will be especially fun for those of you who LOVE the Legend of Zelda! But for the rest of you, it's just a bunch of pictures of a doll that I think are cute ;)

Please check it out, vote and let me know what you think! It's just for fun but I'd love to see if people like them since they're so much fun to make!

Here's the cover of that collection of pictures called *The Adventures of Link and Little Link*! Check it out on my profile! (*and don't forget to follow if you like my stories ;D*)



The Adventures of
Link
and
Little Link

Thannujah Mathiyalagan

HEHE! Let me know what you guys think!! And thank you so much as always for your support!! The next update of Beauty and the Pharaoh will be up very soon!

Thank you!

Love,

Luckycharms <3



Chapter 39 - [Beauty and the Wife]

I slept really well that night, but was woken up by the sounds of someone getting ready. I lifted myself up, eyes squinted and still sleepy as I looked around.

"Do I need to wakeup too?" I asked, still drunk with sleep.

Atem turned around, looking surprised that I was awake. "No," he said as he walked over to me. "You can go back to bed. I will send the maids to wake you up and get ready in a couple hours." He kissed my forehead when he reached me, making me smile.

"Kay," I simply said before collapsing onto the bed again.

Atem let out a short laugh before messing up my already messed up hair and walking off.

It took me a couple moments to fall back asleep, especially since I had no pillow now. Since that headrest looked totally uncomfortable, I had used Atem's chest as a pillow all night. Now I had nothing.

But nonetheless, I eventually fell back asleep, curled up in a ball on Atem's massive bed.

By the time a couple hours passed, I was completely knocked out. I didn't even hear the maids come into the room and I think they were shaking me for some time before my eyes actually opened.

"Wah—"

"Wake up, May!" Siti said as she continued to shake me.

"The Pharaoh gave us permission to shake you awake. He warned us that we might have difficulty waking you up," Kiki said, standing beside Siti. "We hope

you don't mind."

I lifted myself up, shaking my head. "No, I don't—"

I cut myself off when Nauni started tugging on the blankets. I panicked, suddenly completely awake.

"Wait!"

Nauni hesitated. "What's wrong?"

I was naked.

And I know these girls had seen me naked before... but this was a different kind of naked. This was a kind of naked that meant the *you know what* happened the night before.

I felt my cheeks warm up, "how about I meet you girls outside?"

Aat laughed as the other girls looked at each other.

"We have no time for that!" Nauni said with a laugh as she tugged the covers completely off of me while I squealed in embarrassment.

Aat then handed me a robe. "Here!" she said. "There's no need to be embarrassed."

I bit my lip and held the robe in front of me before sighing and putting the robe on me.

They led me to the same bathroom that I was in the night before. I used the toilet, which was so weird. I'm pretty sure it'd be better to not share the details of that experience... though I had to admit to myself that I'd be using a very strange stone toilet like thing for a while now.

It felt odd not to actually properly brush my teeth. The maids gave me this strange mouthwash and that was about it. I mean, I felt fresh and all but something felt weird about not brushing my teeth in the morning with a toothbrush.

Immediately after that, I had expected to go straight to the relaxing bathtub.

But no.

They sat me down on a seat, still uncomfortably naked might I add, and began waxing away pretty much all my body hair.

I was not new to waxing but *dear lord!* They got me pretty much *everywhere!* Everywhere *except* my private areas... though I would have imagined that the private areas would have been the most important part.

When I asked them why they chose not to do that part, they simply said that little girls are the ones who don't have hair there. Hair down there is a symbol of my 'woman-hood.'

And that was interesting... seeing how that was not a perspective that was shared back at home.

Anyhow, after all the painful waxing, I took a bath... which gave me a lot of time to think about what was going on.

To be completely honest with myself... I still didn't really think I was *actually* getting married to Atem. No matter how much I tried to convince myself that it was real... at least in the sense that there was actually some sort of ceremony that was going to happen for Atem and I... I still couldn't believe it.

In some aspects, this all felt like a crazy dream. I felt like I was going to wake up in my bedroom very soon. In my bedroom, back at home, with Neferkiti probably beside me. But then again, Neferkiti spent most of her time with Atem so she probably wouldn't be there when I woke up.

But could you really blame me though?

This was all so weird.

I was in *Ancient* Egypt.

This was crazy.

While deep in thought, I sighed loudly, worrying my new maid friends. But

despite their worry, they dressed me up in a really soft, but thin white dress and covered me in jewelry. I had on bracelets, anklets, armbands, necklaces, earrings and even this crazy, awesome looking headdress that was covered in beads.

After they put on that heavy headdress was when I decided to finally ask what a marriage in Egypt was like. What was the ceremony? What were the traditions? What was I supposed to do?

But to my surprise, just as I opened my mouth to ask, Atem's mother came into the room.

The maids, of course, bowed very low and left the room when his mother told them that she would handle the rest.

Whatever that meant.

Atem's mom then proceeded to silently adjust my makeup and silently fix everything up.

Obviously, I had grown to really like Atem's mother. She was really friendly and had a calm smile. But despite that, being in her presence made me feel nervous.

Finally, after a couple minutes, she stepped back and smiled. "You look lovely."

I smiled back at her, and seeing her looking so pleased made me feel relieved. "So how does it work here?" I asked. "What does a marriage look like?"

"My son wanted it to be very simple since we are leaving to Memphis this evening. So it will simply be a series of prayers and the acceptance of a marriage contract," she said. "Maybe once the war is over and settled, a much grander celebration can be arranged."

I laughed at that... but to be honest, I was glad that it was going to be so simple. Especially since I had yet to wrap my head around this entire situation.

"You do not..." she started, "you do not seem particularly excited, my dear."

Oops.

She caught me.

"Are you not interested in marrying my son?"

Obviously, she wasn't sounding mean or anything like that. And I think that even though she was asking the question, she already knew the answer.

I think she just wanted me to say it out loud.

So I did.

"I haven't completely started to believe that all of this is real yet," I said, honestly. "It's all so strange to me... and that's why I'm acting like this. It just doesn't seem real."

She nodded her head slowly, "Mmm."

"Of course, I love Atem. There's nothing wrong with him at all."

She smiled again. "Good... I am glad to hear that." She then took my hand, surprising me. "I have a present for you."

My eyebrows rose, "oh, I—"

"Akhenatem told me about that necklace he took from you. The one with the Ankh. The one that belonged to your aunty."

"Well, he didn't *take* it from me. I gave it to him."

She nodded. "And I understand that there is some magic associated with it? He mentioned that it stopped his nightmares when he was in your world."

I nodded.

"He also told me that you don't want to take it back... that you wanted him to keep it."

I nodded again. That was true... I felt that it would do more good to him than to me.

She then smiled, and before I realized it, she slipped a big ring onto the thumb my left hand. It was a simple, gold ring that looked like a band. There was nothing grand or extravagant about it, but still, I was surprised, and looked at her

in shock.

"Like that necklace of yours, this is a memento of a loved one. My husband, to be exact."

My eyes widened, "I can't—"

She held her hand up, silencing me.

"I think my husband would have considered it an honor to meet you, young lady. You were the first person who was ever able to get to him, emotionally, since he passed away... he would have loved to meet you."

Awww... that was really sweet.

To be honest... I would have loved to meet him too. Everyone always says such good things about him.

"And that is why I want to give this ring to you," she continued. "My husband had this ring made when Akhenatem, his first son, was born. It was, in a sense, made to honor his birth and so I feel like giving it to you would be something that would have made my husband happy... since you saved our son."

I still thought it was crazy that everyone thought I *saved* Atem. But I was so touched by everything she said that I just smiled.

I really did wish now that I had gotten a chance to meet Atem's father. He was clearly a good person who died too early.

Just like Aunty Maya.

And at that very moment, I realized something.

For a long time, I always thought that Atem and I were such different people. Two whole different people who miraculously managed to fall in love.

But now I realized something.

We had both lost someone who was really important to us... someone who shaped who I was and someone who was supposed to shape who Atem was.

And realizing that made me appreciate all of this even more.

After accepting her gift, Atem's mother took me outside the palace and we were both carried to the temple in one of those litter things.

It was surprisingly much scarier than I imagined it to be.

When we got there, to the same temple where Lord Hepu cast a spell on me to understand Egyptian, I noticed that Atem was already there.

He didn't say anything to me aside from, "did you sleep well?" And immediately after that the ceremony began.

Like both Atem and his mother had said, it was very simple.

All I did was stand there and listen to prayers said by Lord Hepu. After that, he recited what I believed was the contract that Atem's mother had mentioned. It consisted of the typical things you would imagine came with marriage, like watch over one another and never betray each other and so on and so forth.

After those reasonable terms were recited, both Atem and I accepted them.

And that was it.

That was the wedding.

The only people who came were all the court members and a couple rich looking people that I never met.

But the small number of people who came had gifts that they gave to Atem and I. They were almost all jewelry, and every single one of them apologized for such a simple gift, saying that it was because this was all last minute.

I stayed quiet for the most part, but Atem told everyone it was fine.

And literally, maybe twenty minutes later, everyone left... promising for grander gifts when we have the amazing celebration after everything has returned to normal.

Immediately after that, Atem took my hand and led me out of the temple. He

continued not to speak to me, probably deep in thought about something.

I noticed though, that we were being followed by the rest of the court, as well as Atem's mother.

"Where are we going now?" I asked.

Just then, Atem let go of my hand as a guard brought him a horse. "To the boat."

"The boat?"

He didn't continue to elaborate though. Instead, he grabbed me by the waist and made me gasp as he lifted me onto the horse, seating me sideways.

Never in my life had I ever sat on a horse before, so as soon as Atem got on behind me, I was clinging onto him for my dear life. "What—"

The horse stepped forward.

I gasped and closed my eyes for just a moment, but eventually, I opened them again, realizing it wasn't that bad. We weren't going *that* fast. So it was all fine.

Very soon after, we reached the Nile River. When we got off the horse, I gasped and rushed towards the river.

It was beautiful... and huge.

And though it was still day out, the sun was moving closer to the horizon to set and the reflection in the river was absolutely beautiful.

Oh god, did I wish I had my phone. This would have been a beautiful photo.

When Atem walked over to me, he patted my head. "It's more beautiful than anything you've ever seen, isn't it?"

I couldn't lie about that. "Yeah. There's definitely nothing like this in Oakville."

He smiled. "We're going to Memphis," Atem suddenly clarified for me.

"Me too?"

He nodded. "I will leave you in the palace at Memphis before we march out to the Delta. If the People of the Sea are coming, then that is where they will come."

I frowned. "I see... How long will it take to get there?"

"Normally it would take about two weeks. But we've decided to take multiple small boats instead of one large one since that will make them move faster. And we've also increased the crew numbers along with both the sails and the oars so that we can get there in a week."

"A week... on a boat."

"We're going a far distance, May."

I nodded. "Well, at least you're not leaving me behind."

"I considered that... but I felt that I would be more comfortable with the thought of you being under the protection of my brother rather than here alone."

"Oh! I'm going to meet your brother?"

He nodded.

Now I was excited.

I get to meet another one of Atem's family members.

"We're leaving tonight, right?" I asked, looking over at the multiple, medium sized boats.

"Yes."

"Wow... this is so crazy."

He smiled. "Another thing... after all of this is over, you will have to be coroneted—"

"Oh my god."

He laughed.

"How does it feel to be my husband?" I asked, looking at him with a smirk.

He shrugged. "There's nothing different about it. How does it feel to being my wife?"

I grimaced when he said the word 'wife,' which made him roll his eyes. But then I laughed. "It's weird. But I can deal with it."

He rolled his eyes again, but then put an arm around my shoulder. He shook me a little as he spoke, "you look beautiful, by the way."

I looked up at him and grinned, "thanks. The maids waxed my entire body."

Atem chuckled, "did they?"

I nodded. "It hurt. A lot."

"Well, you're an Egyptian woman now, so you have to deal with it. Egyptian women wax their entire bodies all the time."

"Yeah, yeah. Whatever." Though I had to admit, it felt nice to be called an Egyptian woman. Like I'd joined a club or something.

He then leaned over and kissed the side of my head. "Let's get going."

I nodded before he guided me towards the boats.

First a marriage.

Now a trip.

I guess it was time for an adventure.

This was all *definitely* something I was never going to forget. Ever.

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 40 - [Beauty and the Experience]

Okay so... not having a phone kind of sucked. Not only was I just dying to talk to Ro, but there were so many things here that I really wanted to take pictures of.

And I was going to be spending a week on a boat... what else could I possibly do aside from read or scroll through Instagram?

Unfortunately, neither of those were an option.

When I got onto the boat, I was surprised but at the same time, not surprised.

It was a *beautiful* boat... but it was *no* luxury liner. And it was definitely *not* the Titanic.

It was small and long, and there were no rooms or anything below deck. From front to back it looked about twenty big steps long, and from side to side it looked between eight and ten.

It was definitely small.

There were a ton of guys who sat along the side of the boat, oars in hand. Atem had mentioned to me that normally, going downstream meant there were no need for rowers... but we needed to get to Memphis fast.

Hence, the rowers. All of which were men who looked at me with curiosity in their eyes.

They seemed friendly though, and they smiled back at me when I smiled at them.

The middle of the boat consisted of the only room on the ship, and to be honest,

it wasn't even a room. It was a squared area that was sectioned off by light, lavender coloured curtains.

No time was wasted once we entered the boat. Almost immediately, the man who I considered was the captain of the ship, adjusted the sails and signaled the rowers who began to row.

For the beginning of the trip, I sat inside that little curtained area. There was a nice, fluffy mattress in there and so I laid down in that and stared at the sky through the opening at the top.

Atem stayed outside until it began to get dark out. When he finally came in, he looked at me with a raised brow. "What are you doing, staying cooped up in here?"

I sat up on the mattress, "well, there's nothing I can do outside, is there?"

"No," he said. "But you'll get sick if you spend too much time in here. This place is meant only for sleeping. You should sit outside and enjoy the view."

"Well, it's too late now," I said, referring to the fact that it was night out.

Egypt was *really* dark when it was night out. It wasn't like back at home, where there were streetlights everywhere and the headlights of cars shining through your window as they passed by. It was pitch dark.

Right now, however, little skinny candles were all that kept this place up. But Atem went around and blew them out.

It took my eyes a second to adjust to the darkness. "The boat is still moving right?" I think I had gotten used to the sway of the boat.

Atem nodded as he sat next to me on the mattress. "The rowers are taking turns rowing through the night. Usually we do not sail at night but we have no time to waste."

I turned my head and watched as he began to take all the jewelry he was wearing off. I had already done so. It took a long time to figure out the hooks and the clasps and I pinched my skin here and there but I figured it out.

When he was finished, I held my left hand out for him to see. "Look what your mom gave me."

Atem took my left hand in his and examined the ring. "Hmm," he started. "You should be honored. My mother cherished that ring."

"I am," I said, looking at it myself.

"Well, now we've both got something that belonged to a dead person who was close to us."

I laughed at the way he said it. Way to be blunt about it.

When Atem laid down on the bed next to me, I stretched and put my head on his chest. "You know who I miss the most?" I asked him.

"Who?" He put his arms behind his head.

"Aurora, Grandma Seetha and Neferkitti... and Uncle Ethan too."

I think I said those four because I saw them on a pretty much regular basis. Now... spending a couple days without them felt off.

And though I still tried to put off the thought that I may possibly never see them again, it was in the back of my mind and my stomach turned a little as my mind ventured in that direction.

"I miss Neferkitti too," Atem said. "And I guess... Grandma Seetha."

I smiled as I lifted my head up and looked at him. "What about Blake? You saw him more than I did."

"Yes... I guess I miss him too."

I smiled some more and then put my head back down on his chest. After sighing loudly, I closed my eyes.

My body still stung a little from all the waxing, and I thought that maybe I could sleep it off... but after keeping my eyes closed for a short while, I opened them again, not wanting to sleep.

I lifted my head off his chest and looked at him again. "Tell me a story," I suddenly said.

He looked at me with surprised. "What?"

I scooted up a little and laid my head back down beside him. "A story... Uncle Ethan used to tell me all the time that Egyptians knew a lot of stories, so tell me all of them."

"Like?"

"Like... religious stories. All those stories you skimmed over for me for my Ancient Egyptian exam a couple months ago. Tell them to me again but in a lot of detail."

"Why?"

I rolled my eyes and groaned. "When you were illiterate I read you stories! And we don't have books here on this boat but I want to read... so the next best thing is for you to tell me a story," I said. "Besides, if I'm going to be living here, I should be able to think more like your people, you know."

Atem rolled his eyes.

"Tell me it from the beginning," I said, ignoring his eye roll. "Tell me from your creation story, about the Nun guy lifting the gods from the Nile... or whatever it was."

"Dear Ra, you are so ignorant."

I scoffed, lifting my head up yet again. I was going to hurt my neck soon if I kept this up. "I'm asking you to tell me so that I'm *not* ignorant!"

"Okay, okay," Atem said. "I'll tell you."

"Good," I smiled. "Now start, husband."

He smiled a funny smile when I said that, but began with the story telling.

He ended up telling me just until the halfway point of the story of Isis, Osiris and

Seth. Osiris had been murdered, Isis brought him back just long enough to have a kid with him and then she ran away to the marshes in the north to raise that child in secret while Seth was the new Pharaoh.

At that point, Atem said he was tired and turned his back to me. He said he would finish the story tomorrow.

I rolled my eyes, a little bit upset with the fact that he was pausing at such a good part. The only reason I didn't fight with him, however, was because I already knew the story a little and I knew what happened in the end.

I yawned and turned around too, trying to get in a comfortable position to sleep, but I still hadn't gotten used to sleeping in these beds.

Atem knew I wasn't sleeping, though he had his back to me, so he turned around and looked at me. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," I said.

He turned around to face me and then pulled me into his arms. I suddenly felt warm and cozy as I snuggled up against him.

And this was nice.

"What do your people usually do on the night of their wedding?" He suddenly asked.

I knew he was asking to purposely embarrass me.

It was working.

"They go on a honeymoon. And the do the dirty."

He let out a short, deep laugh. "Well," he pulled away and looked at me. "This boat ride could technically be what you call a honeymoon, you know?"

I hadn't thought about that.

But he was right. Why not, right? People go on cruises for honeymoons.

"And if you promise to keep your voice down then we can... do the dirty... as

you called it."

If my skin were fairer, my entire face would have been as red as a tomato because of my embarrassment. Thank god for having a slight tan. And also thank god for the darkness. "What do you mean keep my voice down?"

He then made me gasp by pushing me onto my back and getting in between my legs.

"What—"

"Shh," he whispered, smirking. "We are hidden only by curtains. If you are loud then everyone outside will hear you."

"I'm not being loud!" I whispered back.

"I am *not* talking about now," he leaned forward and kissed my lips. When he pulled away and looked at me, I finally got what he was saying.

I groaned but couldn't help myself from blushing like crazy. "You have an ego the size of the *sun*."

"Do you really challenge my capabilities?" He said as he kissed my neck.

"What's up with guys?" I asked, still whispering and trying not to act like I was totally enjoying this. "Always thinking they're so great at sex. Little do they know that half the time girls are faking—"

He lifted his head back up and looked at me with a raised eyebrow. "Hm. Well, it didn't *sound* like that last night when—"

"*Ohmigod*, shut up, you pig!" I practically squeaked in embarrassment.

He shushed me once more before letting out a silent laugh and kissing me again.

I wouldn't admit it to his face but it was totally true that this guy had me wrapped around his finger.

He knew what he was doing.

And he could do it well.

I mean, he had slipped me out of my dress well before I could even remember that making love involved the removal of clothes. And, to be honest, I was kind of happy that I wasn't bothered by his professionalism. I can imagine why some other girls would not be comfortable with this.

But I guess I had allowed myself to be reasonable.

He was older than me.

More experienced... and I couldn't blame him for that. Not only was he the big bad Pharaoh of Egypt, on top of it all in a palace with loads of riches and power... but he was also good looking. Despite me complaining about his ego, he probably did have a lot of women, and maybe even guys, who wanted a chance with him.

Of course, I wasn't going to think about other women (or men) while he kissed me. And part of that was because I really *couldn't* think of anything else.

All of the warmth I felt when his body was on top of mine practically made me drunk with love. There was no way I could think of anything outside of him while all of this craziness happened.

It was a great feeling.

And a year ago, I would never have imagined that this kind of feeling even existed.

I had heard so much about it from Aurora... read about it in some books... and believe it or not, watched it a couple times in shows and movies.

But you never truly get it till it happens to you.

And I was just more than ecstatic that it was happening with a man that I was madly in love with.

Plus, the fact that the moonlight was shining in through the top of the makeshift room was an added bonus. Talk about romantic.

The only thing was that part of me wished that I could do to him what he could do to me. I wished that I could have him as wrapped around my fingers as he had

done to me.

But I think it would take some time for me. I needed way more experience...

And I guess that was okay... since it almost felt like we had all the time in the world.

I was awoken the next morning by the beautiful feeling of sun on your skin. It was a nice kind of heat that I had never really felt before. I wasn't really into short, shorts or bikinis or anything like that so since I was practically naked right now, parts of my body that had never seems the light of the sun before we're finally getting a chance.

I stretched myself out and sunbathed for just a while longer before getting up and slipping into another simple, white and thin dress. There was a bowl of water sitting at the corner of the room and I used that to wash my face and freshen up.

Going to the bathroom here totally sucked. Since Atem was in a rush there was only going to be one short stop a day and while we were on the boat, we literally had to do our business in our own personalized buckets.

That was the one thing I didn't like about here.

I wish they had toilets.

But anyhow, I guess I would get used to it eventually.

Because I was trying to keep myself silent during the event that took place last night, my constant lip biting had resulted in a swollen lip that was throbbing a little. So I held onto it with my fingers as I stepped out of the makeshift room.

Atem was standing not too far away from me, talking to the man who I believed was the captain.

I didn't bother to bother them, so instead I made my way to the edge of the boat to where the towers were sitting. I wanted to check out the view.

The rowers smiled at me as they continued to work, but ignored me for the most part. There was a large enough spot in between two of the rowers and I plopped myself down there.

"Would you like a cushion, my Lady?" The rower who sat to my left asked me.

I shook my head, "I'm fine. And please, call me May. Not my lady."

The man hesitated, but nodded and then left me to myself.

The view was remarkable. It was nothing like I could ever imagine. The shore was filled with crops and people and literally everyone had their heads up, watching as the line of boats floated by.

Unfortunately, I knew I wasn't able to see it all as well as I wanted to. Obviously, I didn't bring my contact liquid with me, so I was only able to use my contacts for a day. And I didn't have my glasses either. So a lot of it was a blur. But hey, I guess I was lucky that my eyesight wasn't *that* bad.

I could make out a lot of kids in the near distance and almost all of them were bald except for a single lock of hair that they had on the side of their head. And they were all also naked. Some of the kids ran and ran, trying to follow the boats as far as they could, screaming and shouting for our attention.

And that made me laugh.

When they finally grew too tired, they stopped running and began to wave as hard as they could.

I found myself waving back at all the kids, grinning at them. I loved kids. And all of these little boys and girls looked so cute and carefree.

This is how it went on for the next couple days. There wasn't much that could be done aside from enjoying my time with Atem at nights and enjoying the view in the morning. I got to hang out with Atem's mom when the ships took a short stop, but aside from that there wasn't much to do.

However, though the days were slow, I had fun.

It was a relaxing, and awesome experience.

After a week, when the boat stopped at a port, I thought it was another pit stop. But there were massive litters waiting there and tons of people standing in wait.

When Atem got off the ship, everyone got flat onto their bellies in a bow. It was pretty remarkable.

But awkward for me.

I had no idea what to do and I was a little glad that Atem held tightly into my hand. "This is Memphis?" I asked him as we climbed up into the litter.

Atem nodded.

And once I sat down and started to look around, I let it a loud gasp.

In the midst of my confusion, I had completely missed the sight of the symbol of Egypt itself.

The Great Pyramid of Giza.

There it was, standing tall, looking glorious.

"It's beautiful..." I whispered, unable to believe that I missed it in the first place. "I can't believe I'm seeing it when it's still new!"

"Actually," Atem started, "it's about two thousand years old."

I looked at him, "what?"

"Pharaoh Khufu's Pyramid is ancient to us too." He clarified. "It was built about two thousand years ago."

"No way..."

Atem nodded.

And I marvelled and marvelled at all the sights at Memphis as the litter was

carried towards a palace.

The trip to the palace was short. Within what felt like ten to twenty minutes, we were there.

Like back at the port, there were a lot of people waiting and when Atem got out of the litter they all bowed.

Atem didn't wait for me this time.

He left me behind with Lord Hepu holding his hand up to help me down the steps. I watched as Atem walked quickly to a grinning young man who was standing near the entrance of the palace.

Obviously, I couldn't see that clearly at all, but the young man bent over to bow down but before he could even do so, Atem had pulled him into a tight hug.

And that was all I needed to see to know that this guy must have been Atem's brother.

The one who was apparently murdered.

Khamenatem.

Khamenatem hugged his brother back, and as I got closer, I noticed that he couldn't hide the shock on his face.

"Brother," he gasped. "That's a little too tight."

Atem pulled away, but held onto his little brother's shoulders as he looked at him. "I am so happy to see you safe, Khamen."

"I have no idea what you are referring to, but nonetheless, I can tell," Khamen responded.

And Atem hugged him again.

Atem's mother laughed before stepping towards them. "Please give me a chance too, my son." She said to Atem.

It was only then that Atem pulled away and stepped aside from the laughing

Khamen.

"Mother," Khamen bowed before hugging his mother. or step mother, too.

When I reached them and was finally able to see them clearly, I had to catch my breath.

Atem's brother was so handsome.

He was tall, well built and tanned with very short black hair.

But he had these remarkable green eyes. They stuck out so much, since his skin was darker, and his smile was unbelievably kind looking.

Aside from the eyes, he and Atem looked a lot alike. I guess that was expected, since they both had the same father.

For some time, as all the court members greeted the Prince of Egypt, I stood there awkwardly.

When Atem's brother looked at me, though, I suddenly was embarrassed and felt my cheeks warm up. "Is no one going to introduce me to my sister-in-law?"

I felt my cheeks burn more as he bowed low.

"Her name is May," Atem said. "And—"

"I cannot believe you went through with a wedding without telling me or inviting me," Khamen said to his brother when he rose from his bow. "I was very upset, brother."

"You missed nothing, Khamen," Atem said, trying to make his brother feel better. "We had to get it over with before we left Thebes—"

"It is a pleasure to meet you, My Lady," Khamen said to me, cutting Atem off. He was clearly trying to annoy him.

It worked. I could see Atem roll his eyes from the corner of my eye.

"Please... just call me May." God, did 'my lady' sound old.

"May," Khamen said. "I have heard all the rumours. I did not believe them until he hugged me. The last time my brother hugged me was on the day they sealed my fathers tomb."

"Oh, please," Atem rolled his eyes again.

"Myself, as well as all of Egypt, are indebted to you, May."

Well, he was definitely good with his words. And his soft, smooth voice made it not so hard to believe that he was a poet.

"I am at your service," he bowed again.

I chuckled, not knowing what else to do.

"Are you really going to keep your Pharaoh standing here? Waiting?" Atem asked. "I've just had a long journey. I want a bath prepared and a warm meal waiting—"

"All of it has been prepared, brother." Khamen said as he turned around. "Do you think I don't know what my own brother wants?"

I let out a laugh.

"Come," Khamen said as he held out his arm for me to take. "My brother can find his own way. I shall take you and your maids to where you can settle down."

My maids?

I turned my head and saw the four friendly maids who helped me out back at Atem's home standing not too far from us. After Khamen spoke, the four girls rushed towards me.

I hadn't even known they were here, so I was happy to see them. I mean, they were kind of the only friends I had.

But anyhow, with that, Atem's younger brother himself walked me into the palace.

This palace wasn't as big as the one I was in before, but it was definitely big.

He didn't say much to me aside from simple questions like how I was and whether the trip was a difficult one or not. But from our short conversation, it was easy to tell that he was a nice guy.

Much nicer and more of a gentleman than Atem.

However, when we got to what I assumed was the washroom, he ushered the maids in to get things prepared, but stood outside with me.

"I am sure we will have plenty of time later tonight for you and my brother to give me a full explanation of what happened... but I want you to really, truly know how appreciative I am of whatever it is you did for him."

I opened my mouth to explain that I hadn't done much, but he didn't let me speak.

"Let it be giving him a place to stay or a heart to trust in... I am ever so grateful for whatever you did to awaken him. To bring back my real brother."

I smiled. "I... you're welcome."

He chuckled before bowing once more. "I have prepared a grand celebration for you and my brother. I understand that the wedding was rushed and your trip was long, so I want you to relax a little bit. Please, enjoy your bath and I will thank you some more later."

I let out a laugh and then nodded.

A grand celebration, huh?

Well, I guess that sounded like it could be a lot of fun.

HI EVERYONE!

I REALLY HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS CHAPTER!! HAHAAAAHA! I will have the next update up soon!! As always, please VOTE and COMMENT and let me know what you guys think!!! I'd love to hear if you blushed a little here and there HAHAAAAHAH!

If you are enjoying the story so far, please also FOLLOW ME =D I would be VERY HAPPY! hehe!

Thank you as always for your support <3

Love,

Luckycharms!

P.S.

I made a thing:



AHAHHHAHHAH! I think it's ADORABLE, if I do say so myself.

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



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mathiyalagan

Chapter 41 - [Beauty and the Brother]

After taking a bath in flower petals and something that I think may have actually been milk, I got into yet another dress and followed my maid friends out to wherever I was being taken.

I think now that the four girls were getting more and more comfortable with me, they were letting me handle myself a little more... which made me happy. I rather scrub the dirt off my own body than have someone else do it for me.

As we walked towards wherever, I noticed how similar the inside of this palace was to Atem's. Almost identical, to be honest. Except the walls had different paintings and I'm sure that if I could read what it said, it said different things.

"How do you four know your way around here?" I asked the girls, wondering if it was because all these palaces were meant to be the same.

"The four of us come with the queen all the time," Kiki said to me. "And Siti, Nauni and I actually lived here prior to coming to Thebes to be maids."

"Oh! So your family is here, huh?"

Kiki, Siti and Nauni nodded.

"My family is in Thebes," Aat added.

"So when was the last time you saw your family?"

Siti and Nauni sighed. "Aat is lucky," Nauni started. "Her family works at the palace so she gets to see them all the time. But we only get to see ours maybe once a year if we are lucky."

"Memphis is so far away!" Siti added. "Coming here on the Pharaoh's boats is the fastest way! But any other way can take weeks."

I felt bad for them.

It was so strange to hear this... especially since it's so easy to travel around the world back at home. Uncle Ethan can come and go to Egypt from where we live within a day!

Man... I wish I could help them invent a train. But I had no idea how trains worked... and who knows what kind of crazy damage would happen in the future if I helped the train be invented thousands of years earlier than it actually was.

"What about you?" Kiki asked. "Did you live with your family back at home?"

I shook my head. "I did until I was eighteen. And then I moved out, alone."

"Alone?" The four girls looked shocked as they said it together.

I nodded again. "My parents and I... well, my father and I don't really get along."

"Why?" Siti asked.

"He's unhappy with how I conduct my life."

"What do you do that is so bad?" Aat asked.

"Well... my father wants me to be a lawyer. I don't want to be a lawyer."

"Oh!" Nauni sighed in relief, "we thought it was going to be something *horrible*."

I let out a laugh.

"What *do* you want to do?" Kiki asked.

"I don't really know... my favourite uncle is a sort of teacher... and so was my favourite aunt. And I want to be like them. So I guess I want to be a teacher."

"That's a lovely idea," Kiki smiled. "Teachers are great and important people. It's unfortunate your father does not agree."

Before I could open my mouth to respond, I heard a couple gasps and I suddenly bumped into the butt of Nauni. The three girls in front of me were suddenly

bowing and Kiki, who was beside me, immediately bowed too.

When I looked up I saw Atem leaning against a wall and looking in our direction. He pushed himself off the wall and started to walk towards me. "What took you so long?"

"No one told me to rush," I responded, walking around the girls.

He rolled his eyes but grabbed my hand and started to pull me away. I turned around to say bye to the girls but they kept their heads very low.

And then I remembered something. "Hey, 'Tem. I have a question," I said as I stopped walking.

He looked at me. "What?"

"Kiki, Nauni and Siti have family here. I wanted to let them go see them. And they can take Aat too."

I heard the girls gasp again. "Oh no—" Kiki started as she rose. But she shut up when Atem looked in their direction, and she bowed low again.

Atem looked back at me and then back at the girls and then sighed. "Fine."

I smiled and looked at the girls. "Go home and surprise your family."

All four girls got down onto their knees. "Thank you!" They said together. Even Aat, though she was just going to tag along.

I smiled and waved as Atem pulled me into a walk again.

When we were a safe enough distance away and the girls had run off in excitement, Atem looked at me. "You can't let them have too much fun, May. It's their job to be maids."

I rolled my eyes. "Those girls deserve it. I like them a lot."

He looked at me for a moment and then let out an annoyed breath.

After walking for another couple seconds, Atem pulled me into a room with a big table in the center of it. It could probably seat about twenty people but only

Atem's brother, his mom and the court members were there.

Atem pulled out a chair for me closer to his brother, who was sitting at one end of the table, before walking to the other end of table and sitting down.

Atem's mother was sitting across from me and most of the other court members were standing around, except for Lady Hema who was sitting right next to Atem's mother.

When I turned to look at Atem, he jerked his chin in the direction of his brother, "tell him what happened."

"You want *me* to tell him?"

"I've already told everyone the story. I'm sure the Royal Court would rather be entertained by your perspective of the situation."

"I don't know the story at all," Atem's brother said. "Aside from some of the rumors that I have heard."

I looked at him. "Well, it's a long story."

"We have time," he smiled. "The celebration isn't until this evening, so please, go ahead."

I took a breath. "Well... it all started on my eighteenth birthday. Atem literally appeared out of nowhere and I thought he was just some crazy guy because he was dressed weirdly and spoke weirdly *and* he had a sword—" how could I forget the sword? "—but I took him to my place instead of leaving with the authorities because I had a weird dream. My aunt, the owner of the ankh necklace which Atem wears now, warned me about what was going to happen... and I didn't believe in magic or anything like that back then but when he appeared in front of me, I just felt like I *had* to help him—"

"So you are *truly* from the future?" Khamenatem asked.

I nodded.

He shook his head in amazement. "Alright. Continue, please."

And so I went on with my side of the story.

I told them about how my aunt studied the fall of Egypt and how the wizard tried to attack me at some point and also how I taught Atem how to read and write. I told them everything that I could remember.

Atem chimed in here and there to correct me on certain things and to disagree with me about others. But for the most part, he stayed silent.

And when I figured I was done and completely caught up, Khamenatem shook his head again. "That is remarkable... a full year had passed in your time... yet only a few seconds had passed in ours. No wonder my brothers change seemed so sudden."

"Yeah..." I guess it wasn't exactly sudden. When he was with me... it felt like it took *forever*.

"And no wonder my brother was so happy to see me," he said, looking at Atem. "You are quite certain that I was murdered in this alternate reality?"

Atem nodded, "they ran their sword right through your head. It went in through one end and out another."

Atem's mother put a hand over her mouth and Khamenatem raised his brows. "That... is horrible," he looked at me. "Not exactly a pleasant way to die."

"My uncle said you died honorably, though. He said you took it like a man."

"Took it like a man?" He repeated, "well, I am pleased to hear that much."

"Let us stop talking about such things," Atem's mother said. "I will not allow for such a fate to fall upon either of my sons... I will pray till the death of me—"

"I know you will," Atem said as he leaned back in his seat and crossed his arms. "Which is exactly why I ask that you stay away from temples until the battle is over."

"What?" His mother scoffed.

"I already told you how *you* died, mother."

She hesitated.

"If keeping you away from the temples will prevent that then so be it. Feel free to pray at the palace, though. Under the protection of as many guards as I decide."

His mother let out a breath, but didn't argue with him.

"So, my Pharaoh," Lord Ahmose started, "do you really believe that we can alter the fate of our nation? What if this was what the gods wanted?"

"There is no need to be so negative, Ahmose," Lady Taka said.

"I agree," Lord Hepu said. "We must fight to protect the people of Egypt and maintain order. I believe that the situation in this alternate reality was a punishment from the gods for not maintaining *maat* as we were supposed to. However, our Pharaoh has repented and has chosen to make up for what he has done. The gods will appreciate that much."

Atem let out a breath. "Let's hope so."

"I just hope that whatever solution that befalls us will not involve a knife piercing through my skull," Khamenatem said with a light-hearted chuckle.

I smiled at him. It was nice that he wasn't freaking out about the whole thing.

He smiled back at me before looking at his brother. "With regards to the attack," Khamenatem started, suddenly getting serious, "do you have any updates on the soldiers from Upper Egypt?"

"Still marching towards Memphis, my Prince." Lord Renefer answered for Atem.

"And what about here?" Atem asked, "have your soldiers began their march north?"

Khamenatem nodded, "as soon as I got the order from the capital, brother, I sent them off. They arrived two days ago and are intensively monitoring the coast. I have ordered that any ship seen in the horizon should be seen as a threat and we are to be notified immediately."

"Good. And nothing so far?"

"Nothing at all."

Atem nodded again.

Khamenatem suddenly stood up. "Though the situation may not call for it... I insist that we all enjoy ourselves tonight. Let us put aside our troubles while the Lord Atum descends into and passes through the underworld. Once he rises again in the morning, we shall continue with our plans."

I knew what he was talking about.

Atem had told me this story on the boat.

Khepri, Re and Atum are all the sun. Khepri is the new born sun in the morning, Re is the sun throughout the day, and Atum is the aged, old sun that sets and passes through the underworld. With the help of Seth (yeah, the evil uncle of Horus), Atum is able to defeat Apep and then rise back again in the morning as Khepri.

Yeah, I was Egyptian smart now.

"Come now, let's celebrate my brother's rebirth."

Atem smirked at that but stood up too.

Atem and Khamenatem walked ahead while I stayed back walking with Atem's mom. I had no idea where we were going and I had no idea what it meant to have a party here. So I was kind of excited and kind of nervous.

The four maids had kind of dressed me up a little fancy though. I had the eyeliner and the heavy headdress and lots and lots of jewelry. I kind of felt overdressed at first, to be honest.

But after walking a bit, Atem turned the corner and left us.

"Where's he going?" I asked as Khamenatem waited for me to reach him.

"A Pharaoh doesn't come to a party without dressing up properly," Khamenatem

said. "He is going to get dressed. He will be joining us shortly but for now you are stuck with me."

I smiled and when he held his arm out for me to take, I took it. Boy, was this guy a gentleman.

When we got to a big hall, I was surprised by the number of people that were there. To be honest, I thought it would be a party with just a couple people...

But there were a *lot* of people.

As soon as we walked in, everyone bowed for a moment before Khamenatem raised his hand. Then, music started play and it suddenly looked and sounded like a party.

All of the court members, Khamenatem and myself made our way to a giant table at the end of the room. There was one big seat that was left empty beside me and obviously that was Atem's.

And while Khamenatem explained how parties here worked, I marveled in awe at the music.

There were these women who played these massive harp like instruments, and there were drums and these strange looking clarinet-slash-trumpet things. There were some tambourine-ish instruments too and something that looked like a banjo.

It was fantastic.

According to Khamenatem, we would wait for Atem and once he arrived, ready, we would eat and enjoy the performances of the dancers and the musicians.

"Do you dance?" Khamenatem asked me.

I shook my head, "nope. No. I do not."

He chuckled, "why do so many girls say that?"

"Probably because they are confident that they can't dance?"

He chuckled again. "Well, there is no way you can enjoy an Egyptian party without dancing, my friend. So before the night is over, you must dance."

I just shook my head continuously, making he laugh.

Something I realized then was that Khamenatem was probably the same age as me. What was strange, however, was that he acted so much older. His speech was so eloquent and his attitude was so mature. You couldn't always find nineteen year old guys like that back at home.

Plus he was super cute.

And considerate.

He talked away explaining lots of things to me and totally understanding that there were a lot of things I didn't understand about this place.

He told me what kinds of foods they would serve and how there would be lots of beer. And when I told him that I didn't want any beer because I heard it wasn't that good, at least back at home it wasn't, he assured me it was.

And as he talked, Atem finally walked back in.

I knew he was there when everyone silenced and the music stopped and everyone at my table stood up while all the musicians fell flat onto their bellies in a bow.

When I looked over at him, I had to admit, he looked pretty awesome. He looked like the classic representation of a Pharaoh with the nemes headdress and all the jewelry and the super nice, colourful looking shendyt, which was, according to Atem, the skirt thing.

He looked awesome.

He didn't stop walking, continuing his way towards us, but he did wave his hand, which made all the bowing people stand up and continue on with the celebration.

When he sat right next to me, the first thing he said was, "I want food."

I rolled my eyes.

Khamenatem, however, laughed, "it's funny how much you've changed, yet you haven't changed at all."

And with the Pharaoh's orders, food was served to everyone, the music became louder and I guess the party officially started.

The food was great. I mean, of course, there were some things I didn't like, but for the most part I liked it all. They even served those honey balls that Atem made for me a while back. And they were delicious. The ones Atem made for me tasted a little different, but good nonetheless.

Both Atem and Khamenatem forced me to drink the beer. It smelled awful and I didn't want to touch it, but they forced me to drink it. Atem mentioned that this was pretty much what everyone in Egypt drank on a daily basis so I would have to get used to it.

So I drank it.

And though it smelled awful, it didn't taste as bad.

I mean, it wasn't great... but it was tolerable.

So I drank the beer. I definitely didn't drink a lot, only half a cup... but it did seem to do the trick.

Eventually, when the world began to spin just *slightly*. Khamenatem stood up. "Let us dance!"

I looked up at him, not realizing he was talking to me.

He then looked at Atem, "you wouldn't mind me dancing with your wife, would you?"

"Go right ahead," Atem said. "But let me warn you, she isn't good."

I smacked him *really* hard against the arm, making him wince.

"Ow!" He hissed.

I realized then that if anyone had seen that then that would be bad. I just hit the

Pharaoh.

I blame the alcohol.

Khamenatem however, burst out laughing. "She just hit you!" His voice raised a couple pitches as he said it.

Atem frowned, but I noticed all the court members turn and look at us.

Oh man.

But Khamenatem was dying of laughter. "Oh dear Ra!" he laughed, "what has the world come to? My brother allowing a girl to hit him? Remarkable!"

Now I smiled.

I guess I wasn't in trouble.

Even some of the royal court, except for Lord Renefer, started to chuckle.

Atem rolled his eyes, "just get this nuisance away from me."

"You cannot talk to your wife like that, my son," his mother, who was sitting on the other side of him, said.

Atem turned and scoffed at her, "she *hit* me."

His mother chuckled before wiping her lips, "that doesn't matter. You must always speak to your wife with respect."

"Yeah," I agreed.

Atem rolled his eyes and crossed his arms. "Just go. Go dance."

I still didn't want to dance though, but Khamenatem had grabbed a hold of my arm. "Wait, wait!" I started, "I'll only dance if Atem dances."

I knew Atem wouldn't dance, which is why I said it.

"My brother doesn't dance," Khamenatem said.

"Well force him to come."

Khamenatem let out a short laugh before rolling his eyes. "I cannot do that, he is the Pharaoh! You cannot force the Pharaoh to do anything." He was already pulling me away from the table.

"Exactly!" Atem said after us. "You should learn a thing or too from him, May."

My drunk self stuck my tongue out at him, making the court members gawk. But they all started to laugh... even Lord Renefer broke out into a smirk this time around.

Well, this wasn't so bad, I guess.

When we got to the "dance floor," Khamenatem and I were joined by a bunch of pretty much naked dancers. They all did some crazy acrobatic dances that I could not even imagine doing. And the fact that they were all naked didn't help the situation.

"Show me a popular dance in your world," Khamenatem shouted over the music.

I felt my cheeks heat up like crazy, there was absolutely no way I was going to twerk.

So I started with the classic "raise the roof" dance before shifting to an awkward wiggle.

Khamenatem burst out laughing.

Then he, along with the dancers, taught me the moves of Ancient Egypt.

And I guess it was kind of a blast.

I spent most of the night dancing to the loud music and it was so much fun! It was so different to clubs at home. The music wasn't pounding in my ears... it was more so a pretty sound. And there were no guys who come out of nowhere and try to rub up against you.

But I was dancing with this one girl who was super pretty but also an amazing dancer when I suddenly began to feel sick. I stopped dancing and held her hands,

thanking her for dancing with me before turning towards Khamenatem.

When I got to him, I opened my mouth to talk but felt it coming. So I covered my mouth with both my hands and held in the puke.

Guess even the small amount of beer didn't settle.

Khamenatem seemed to understand immediately.

I saw him make a gesture at Atem, who was watching us the entire time. Atem nodded, looking worried, but let Khamenatem grab my hand and rush me outside.

When we got outside, the cool night breeze hit me and it felt fantastic. It was enough to make me feel instantly better. Khamenatem told me to let it out though, and I bent over while he rubbed my back, trying to let loose.

On the floor, might I add.

But in the end, it didn't come out.

Thank goodness.

"I'm fine," I said as I straightened up, "thank you. But let me just stay out here and get some fresh air for a bit."

Khamenatem nodded. "I will wait with you."

"It's fine, go in! Enjoy the party."

He shook his head. "Trust me, I could use the air too, it's getting hot in there."

I smiled at him. The outside of the banquet hall was a long pathway that had one end open to the outside but a railing that blocked us from passing through. However, if we walked a couple steps to the right, there was an opening and a bunch of steps that led to the grounds outside.

The grounds looked kind of like a really big garden. It was super pretty and nice to look at.

"Do you drink a lot back at home?" Khamenatem suddenly asked.

I shook my head. "Actually, I think the first time I got drunk was with Atem." Not including that time my drink was spiked, of course.

"Really?" Khamenatem asked. "Did my brother drink a lot there?"

"No... he didn't."

"Good," he smiled. "He can get out of hand when he's drunk."

Now I laughed. "Really?" I asked. "When he got drunk with me he was really calm and quiet and ended up telling me he thought he was in love with me."

It was okay to say that to him, right? I mean, since I was technically Atem's 'wife,' I'm sure everyone already knew that, right?

Khamenatem laughed too. "He must not have been *that* drunk then," he said. "When my brother is drunk, he gets very aggressive."

I tilted my head slightly but then my heart skipped a beat.

That meant that he wasn't as drunk as I thought he was the first time he told me that he loved me. The thought was kind of nice.

Khamenatem then sighed, "it's so good to have him back... It's been so long since I've seen him smile."

"You really love your brother, don't you?"

"More than the world itself. I would die for him if I had too, which was exactly when he sent me up here."

"Really?"

Khamenatem nodded. "Every time he made a rash decision, I would bother him about it. I would continue to ask him to stop what he was doing. One day I caught him at the wrong moment and in a fit of rage he picked up a heavy statue made of stone and threw it in my direction. It didn't hit me, of course. But I think that moment made him worry for my safety. So he sent me here."

My eyebrows rose.

Atem hadn't told me that part of the story.

"I was furious at first. I thought of it as a banishment... but a year passed and I had noticed that maybe this entire situation was good," he started to smile. "After what had happened, my brother settled down a bit... probably realizing how out of hands his tirades were getting. So he calmed down... not enough, of course. But it was better than nothing."

"And you forgave him?"

"Yes," he responded. "Of course."

What he said made sense, since when I met Atem he wasn't that frightening. If I had met that version of Atem, he probably would have gone through with those threats he made earlier in our relationship and actually killed me.

"I do not blame him, though. He has gone through a lot. I was too young to remember much of it in any sort of detail... but my father's second wife and her family were not good people," he said.

I nodded. "He told me about her."

"My brother was a child when he went through all of that trauma. No child should ever have to deal with that... and no child should ever have to make such adult decisions."

"Your step-mother and brother are still alive, right?" I asked, "Atem said he kept them alive?"

Khamenatem nodded. "Imprisoned, but alive. My brother had given them the option of suicide... as death was the lawful punishment for treason. But they chose not to die," he said. "However, they were only given the option to live because my brother was smart. He knew that executing them could cause problems with the Hittites."

I let out a breath. "That sounds so scary."

"You have nothing to fear, trust me," Khamenatem smiled at me. "My brother has handled them appropriately and that part of our life is over. We must move on with clear hearts."

I nodded, looking at the garden. That was true. This part of Atem's life had passed. He could finally move on... well, at least after this whole Sea People thing is dealt with.

"And speaking of clear hearts... I must say that your entry into our lives has brought on my desire to clear my own heart."

I looked back at him. "Yeah?" I started. "What did you do?"

The young man let out a sigh before smiling. "I've had a secret that I've been keeping from him... and I hope to reveal it to him now that he's a better man."

"A secret, huh?"

He nodded.

"Well, I'm sure you shouldn't worry. Just let it—"

"What is taking you two so long?"

Both Khamenatem and I jumped at the sound of Atem's voice as he exited the banquet hall and walked towards us.

"I hope that I can trust that my own brother isn't trying to mess around with my *wife*."

My heart skipped a beat when he said wife, but I slapped his arm with the back of my hand.

Khamenatem just laughed.

"Actually, Khamenatem does have something important to say to you," I said.

The younger brother looked at me with shock, before looking at his older brother.

"And what's that?" Atem asked.

He stared blankly for a moment before swallowing back what I assumed was his nervousness and looking down at his hands. "You must promise me not to get mad, brother."

Atem crossed his arms and leaned against the railing next to me. "Tell me what it is first."

Khamenatem let out a sigh. "There's something that I've kept a secret from you for some time now—"

"Have you, now?"

Khamenatem nodded, suddenly reminding me of a little boy.

"What did you do?" Atem asked, sounding a little worried now.

Khamenatem took a deep breath before he spoke. "There's... a girl."

My eyebrows rose up high on my forehead.

"A girl?" Atem asked, probably even more shocked than I was. "Why are you so frightened to tell me about a girl?"

"I'm in love with her," Khamenatem said, looking straight at his brother's eyes.

"And? So?" Atem narrowed his eyes. "I still don't understand why you were so frightened to tell me something like that."

Khamenatem's eyebrows scrunched together. "She's... a maid..."

My hands flew to my cheeks right before I started to "awww."

A prince.

In love with a maid?

Classic!

But romantic nonetheless.

However, though I was 'awww-ing,' Atem stayed silent.

The silence was strangely long as both Atem and his younger brother stared at each other for a bit.

Obviously, I stopped my awing and found myself standing there awkwardly.

"A maid," Atem said.

"Well, she makes medicines and collects herbs—"

"But she is a maid."

"Yes..."

"Khamen—"

"I know what you're thinking," Khamenatem started, holding his hands up.

"Which is exactly why I kept this from you... but you have to trust me, brother. I kept this a secret because, before I met May and saw how much you've changed, I knew you would have had her jailed in an attempt to protect me from your worst fears... I know that you wouldn't have even given me a chance to explain myself—"

"Then explain yourself."

For some reason, though I was a little annoyed with Atem's exaggerated response, Khamenatem looked hopeful with his words.

Maybe it was because Atem wouldn't have even bothered to let his little brother explain back then.

Maybe the fact that he was asking for an explanation meant something.

"You have to trust me." He repeated. "I know she isn't using me... She is a *good* girl and she is devoted to you as our Pharaoh. I swear it."

Atem narrowed his eyes.

"One of the men you had executed a over five years ago... he was the rapist and murderer of her eldest sister. He initially got away with his crimes, however when he was caught a second time, your actions brought comfort to her family and she prays her thanks every day, brother."

Atem looked slightly taken aback.

"I have known her for three years now, brother... and I have realized my love for her for two of those three years. She is very humble and very noble and she has asked for nothing from me. Not a single gift. She even refuses to take an extra loaf of bread simply because she knows it's not her place."

My heart skipped a beat at his sweetness. Man... was he really into this girl. And I had to admit, the girl sounded great too.

"If you would just meet her... you'd understand what I'm saying. I'm sure you'd like her, brother. You'd like her a lot if you got to know her... I'm sure of it."

Atem just stared at his brother, clearly thinking about it. And when Khamenatem shared a glance with me, the hope in his eyes was unbelievable.

And suddenly, Atem sighed. "Is it my approval you're seeking?"

"Your approval is what I'm always seeking, brother," Khamenatem said. "Once father died, you are the one who took his place in my heart and you know that."

Awww, that was sweet.

"If you tell me to end it... I will. You know I will. I will always do what you tell me to do because I know you only mean well for me," Khamenatem said as he looked confidently into his brother's eyes. "But I just wanted to explain it to you from my perspective. I wanted you to see it the way I'm seeing it."

Atem let out another breath. "Fine," he said, and almost instantly, his brother's eyes lit up. "But I will not accept it completely yet. Bring her to me in the morning and I will judge her for myself. Do you understand?"

Khamenatem hugged his brother tightly, surprising him.

And I laughed.

Now this was sweet.

"Thank you, brother!" Khamenatem said happily as he pulled away. "She won't let you down. I swear it!"

"I hope not," Atem said, firmly. "Because if she does, I will not hesitate to send

her away from you."

Khamenatem didn't seem phased by that. He must have been really confident. "I understand." He was already walking away.

"Where are you going?" Atem asked.

"I'm going to go tell her the great news," he was already running off and I was laughing. "She will be ready to meet with you in the morning."

Atem took a deep breath and when his brother was out of sight, he turned to me. "You knew about this?"

I shook my head. "He told me there's something he wanted to tell you. But he didn't tell me what it was."

Atem sighed once again and rolled his eyes before walking off.

"Why are you so upset?" I asked, following him. I was still a *tiny* bit tipsy so I had to watch myself.

When Atem reached the staircase that lead to the garden he sat down on the steps. "This isn't right—"

"What do you mean?" I asked, sitting next to him. "You just made your brother so happy."

"But she's a maid."

"And he's confident that she isn't a bad person," I said. "Isn't that all that matters?"

"No," Atem said, firmly. "That is *not* all that matters. If something were to happen to me... Khamen is meant to be the new King and having a servant as his bride would disrupt his claim to the throne and—"

"Whoa," I started, cutting him off. "Hold on."

He looked at me.

"If something were to happen to you?" I asked, getting mad. "What's that

supposed to mean?"

"We may have to fight a war with the People of the Sea. I must be prepared to—"

"To what?" I asked. "Die?"

"Yes. This is a war—"

"No way, Atem," I scoffed. "Are you serious?"

"Yes. I am."

I narrowed my eyes. "Dying is out of the question!" I practically hissed. "That isn't even an option."

He looked confused. "I have to think ahead—"

"Yeah. And you aren't going to think about dying. That's not an option," I repeated. "It never was and never will be. Nothing is going to happen to you."

He just looked at me.

"If you were to *die*, then what on earth would happen to me?" I asked. "I may not have admitted it to myself yet but let's be serious... I'm *stuck* here."

I think he was starting to get it now, because his expression softened slightly.

"And yeah, your family and all your friends are great and all but I don't *know* any of them. If you were to die, there would be no one left here for me to live for. So if you are going to think like that then I suggest you hurry up and find a way to send me home before you head off to war."

"May—"

"If not, then you dying means I'm coming straight after you. And I'm sure that that's not what you want."

He sighed and rubbed his face with his hands.

And when he opened his eyes he was startled by my pinky finger in front of his face. "What—"

"Promise me you will *not* die," I asked... no, practically begged. Though I was initially mad at him, when I said this I felt my voice crack.

He looked at me with surprise.

"You told me that after all of this was over that you would do everything you could to keep me happy. You can't keep that promise if you die. So pinky-promise that you won't die."

Atem let out a short laugh before reaching out and entwining his pinky with mine. "Fine."

He had made pinky promises with me before and always complained about how ridiculous the entire tradition was. However, despite his complaining, he always did it.

Just like now.

When I pulled my pinky away, I hugged my legs and frowned. "You are such a jerk."

"I did the pinky-promise, did I not?" he argued back. "What more do you want from me, woman?"

When I didn't say anything back, he put his arm around me and pulled me closer to him. After a moment, he sighed. "I'm sorry," he said. "I did not mean to upset you. I was just trying to make a point that—"

"Whatever. And besides... I'm sure it's not as bad as you think," I said as I hugged his arm and rested my head on his shoulder. "If you really think about it, technically I'm low in social status too. I bake cakes for a living, which seems to be a maid-like job. And on top of that, I'm a foreigner."

Atem nodded. "That's true."

"And your court let you, the Pharaoh of Egypt, marry me, didn't they?"

"That is true," he repeated.

I looked up at him, still hugging his arms. "See, you have to think before you

“speak you stupid king,” I said. “If you had thought this through you wouldn’t have upset me—”

He cut me off by kissing my lips.

I kissed him back, but when he pulled away he gave me an annoyed look. “I said I’m sorry. Just let it go.”

I rolled my eyes but didn’t say anything back.

We stayed silent for a bit before Atem spoke up again. “Do you want to know something unbelievable?”

“What?” I asked, curious.

“All this time... I had no idea that I needed... to be saved,” he said. “Even after all of this craziness happened. Even after everything everyone said... I didn’t realize it until my brother said what he did.”

I looked at him, letting go of his arm and watching his face.

He was looking out at the garden, probably at birds that still seemed to be awake, playing in the tree not too far from us. “Imagine if none of this happened... if I had continued on the way that I was going prior to meeting you.”

I did. I thought about it.

“Khamen looks up to me so much, I am his father figure and I always knew that... But nonetheless, I would have, without a doubt, destroyed him. I would have broken his heart without meaning to.”

“Well, at least you realize it. Now you can make sure you never make that mistake.”

He nodded before putting his arm around my waist and pulling me even closer to him than I already was. “And you may deny it, May... but it *is* thanks to you,” he said. “You have saved my life.”

I felt my heart grow light as I smiled. I mean, it was weird when other people said it but it was kind of nice when he did.

You're welcome.

You're welcome for saving your life Atem.

I smiled some more.

I felt him kiss my temple, which made me smile some more. The amount of romance between the two of us had escalated a hundred fold since we got here and I was totally fine with that.

It was great.

I mean, yeah. I still didn't feel like we were *actually* married... but the romance that probably came with the title of a married couple was definitely a great bonus.

And that made me wonder if he would still have kissed me the way he did or touch me the way he did if we didn't end up getting married.

But as I thought, I realized the question was irrelevant.

I let out a breath to myself but kept smiling. Ro would have been so happy for me. If only she could know what was going on. That would be amazing.

And as I thought about all of those things while sitting comfortably in silence with Atem, I think we were both surprised when we heard the deep voice of Lord Renefer. "My Pharaoh."

Atem pulled his arm away from me before turning around and looking at Lord Renefer, who was walking quickly towards us with five men behind him. Four of the five men were very built and wore only white skirts and had hair that fell to their shoulders. They held a massive wooden shield in one hand and a tall spear in the other.

The fifth man also wore a white skirt but looked really skinny. He was tall and had a scroll in his hand. I could tell almost instantly that this guy was some sort of messenger, while the other men were soldiers.

"What's wrong?" Atem asked.

Lord Renefer let out a breath. "You were right, my Pharaoh."

Atem raised an eyebrow.

"This messenger has arrived from the delta. They have spotted foreigner ships."

Atem stood up. "They have... how many?"

Lord Renefer blinked before he spoke. "Hundreds."

My mouth fell open and my heart sank as I stood up too.

"They are still quite the distance away," Lord Renefer started, "but I think we should not waste any more time."

Atem nodded. "You're right. We should leave with the armies as soon as they are ready. The sooner the better."

"Should I send out the message to the generals?"

"Yes. Notify me as soon as the soldiers are ready to march. We must arrive at the delta early and be well prepared for their attack. If we can get to them before they land, then that would be better."

"Yes, my Pharaoh," Lord Renefer said as he bowed.

And with that, he rushed off with the soldiers and the messenger.

I looked at Atem, who stood there quietly for a moment. When he looked back at me, I could see the worry on his face.

This was it.

These were the people who destroyed Egypt... and if Atem played his cards right, he could prevent it from happening a second time.

He stepped towards me and kissed my forehead before speaking. "I will send my mother to take you to your room. You should rest, May. For now, I should end this celebration and pass on the news to the royal court."

Before I could respond, Atem began to walk back into the hall.

And as I heard the muffled music come to a stop, a horrible fear filled every inch of my body.

I guess the reality of all of this was finally hitting me.

Hey all!

Thank you for reading this LONG chapter! Haha! If you liked it, please don't forget to VOTE, COMMENT and FOLLOW! =D!

Sorry for ending off on such a negative note!! I will definitely have a new update for you all ASAP!

Here is another silly picture for you all:



HAHAHAHAHAHAH! Oh wow, laughing at my own jokes. xD

Anyhow, thank you as always for reading and continuing to support me!!!!!! I love you all so much!!!!!!

Take care,

Luckycharms!



Chapter 42 - [No Mercy and the Pharaoh]

Despite being the evil and all-powerful Pharaoh that everyone feared... I had never actually led my army into war. I never had the need too. People feared myself and my army enough to stay away.

The Egyptian army was the strongest force in all of the nations. It has been for thousands of years. That was why we have remained so powerful in the region, and everyone knew better than to mess with us.

Except the People of the Sea, of course.

We knew little about these people except that they came from somewhere past the horizon and the names of some of the tribes that previously invaded. We also knew that they had remarkable naval forces and unique weapons.

However, despite having the potential to be a valiant opponent to the Egyptians, they were cowardly in the sense that they only attacked when Egypt was weak... like attacking a man while sleeping.

They attacked during political chaos or during instability in the capital.

They attacked when the Pharaoh had lost the control and love of his people.

Which was exactly why I think they were attacking now.

The wizard had clearly been conspiring with them... and they thought I was gone. They thought I had been cursed and sent away and they thought they were going to catch us off guard. Clearly, they hadn't gotten the message.

I wasn't going to let these monsters into the heart of my country. We had the upper hand. We would take them down.

I hadn't expected to sleep well at all that night. I mean, how could I? Marching out to war isn't a thought that provides us with peaceful dreams.

And it didn't help that May was just lying there for most of the night, staring at the ceiling.

Early in the morning, after conducting our morning prayers, I passed my responsibility to the gods over temporarily to Lord Hepu, who was staying behind. I couldn't be conducting the scheduled prayers in the middle of a battle, after all. And after that was done, we were pretty much prepared to leave.

May was still awake.

She was sitting with my mother outside the throne room of the Memphis palace, waiting for me, obviously.

When she spotted me, she got up and rushed towards me. "When are you leaving?" She asked. I could see the exhaustion in her eyes. She wasn't good at staying up all night.

"Soon... within the next hour," I responded. "The soldiers are ready. The first army of charioteers are already riding North and we will be leaving with the second."

"How long will it take you to get there?"

"It shouldn't be more than a two day trip."

May sighed. "And how am I supposed to know you're safe? It's not like you have phones here."

I smiled at her. "You're just going to have to trust me."

She let out a short but unhappy laugh. "And when has that worked out for me?"

Though normally I would have been, I wasn't insulted by her words. I knew she was joking, but I couldn't blame her for being upset.

That was how it was like here... thousands and thousands of people had loved ones in the army and they would not know for months, sometimes years, if their

loved one were safe. The only exception was if the loved one knew how to read and write, but even then, sometimes delivering a letter could take months.

This wasn't like May's world, where you could send a text from miles away and receive it in less than a second. Her people were lucky in that sense.

I then felt a hand on my back, "my Pharaoh?"

When I turned my head I saw Lord Renefer bowing. "We should get going."

"Right," I said before turning back to May. "You can walk with us to the gate, I believe our chariots are ready."

May sighed, but nodded, letting me take her hand in mine.

The walk was short but silent, and when we arrived at the gate of the palace, I was surprised to see my brother Khamen jump off a chariot. "Brother," he bowed before walking over to me. "I guess we'll have to save my introduction to my love for after—"

"What are you doing?" I asked, cutting him off.

He hesitated. "What do you mean?"

I recognized that chariot to be his. His chariots were always extremely colorful and beautifully painted. "You are not coming with us, Khamen."

The smile on my brother's face faded almost instantly. "Wha— why not?"

"I already told you, I do not want you anywhere near the People of the Sea. I told you what happened—"

"Brother... I am not going to sit back while you fight," Khamen argued. "I swore to always be by your side. I will fight *with* you."

"Absolutely not," I said firmly. "It's too dangerous."

"I am not a child, brother. I can fight," he argued back, making me roll my eyes in annoyance. "I am an excellent fighter!"

"I know you are, Khamen... but I do not want to be constantly worrying about

you. Besides, you have to stay here and protect May."

"My Pharaoh," I heard Lord Hepu call from behind me.

When I turned around, I saw him standing next to my mother.

"I think Prince Khamenatem should come with you, my Pharaoh. Something tells me that that is a good idea," he said.

I let out a breath and put a hand over my face as Khamen smiled proudly.

"And if you want someone here to protect May then I will do that for you," he added. "I am sure you can trust me."

When I looked back at him, I saw him smiling. Of course I trusted him, and so I nodded. "Fine."

Khamen smiled, "good. We will send the People of the Sea back to wherever they came from together."

I rolled my eyes. "You will obey every word I say, do you understand?" I said, waving my finger at him. "Any act of disobedience and I will send you right back home."

Khamen nodded quickly, his smile fading as he saw the serious in my words.

I then turned to my mother.

I hadn't realized she was near tears until I looked at her. "Mother..."

As soon as I said that, she burst out crying before she hugged me.

I wanted to groan, but I knew my trivialization of her fear would upset her more. So I kept it in and hugged her back. "You have nothing to fear, mother. We will be fine. Just stay away from the temples, Lord Hepu will pray on your behalf as he is for me."

She nodded before pulling away and held on to my hands. "Please be safe, my son. Do not do anything rash. Make sure you think like a King, child. Be wise, remember what you learned as a child... what you read in the letter to

Merykare... the tongue is a King's sword. Speaking is stronger than fighting—"

"Yes, mother," I said. "Trust me, I know." How could I not? Those were the famous words of a wise king, and I was instructed to memorize every line of that letter as a child and recite it to my father. Though I would rather have been playing with the other children than sitting there memorizing lines, I remember feeling like the effort was worth it when I saw the proud look on my father's face after I recited the entire letter to him without a single mistake.

She smiled at me before getting on her toes and kissing my cheek. "If anything goes wrong, I do not care what you said... I will come up to the delta myself."

I rolled my eyes, "and do what, mother? Nag at the Sea People until they return back to whence they came?"

She chuckled through her tears before she let go of my hand. "Please... send a messenger to keep us updated."

"I will."

Finally, I turned to May.

She was standing there with her hands behind her back, clear signs of worry on her face. "So this is it?" She asked.

I stepped towards her and nodded. "Do not fear, May. Everything is going to be fine."

I could tell she was skeptical.

"If you *think* something bad is going to happen then it will. You need to believe in me."

"I *do* believe in you," she said. "That doesn't mean I can stop myself from worrying."

I stepped forward and kissed her lips, not really worrying for once about all the others watching us. When I pulled away, she wrapped her arms around my neck and hugged me tightly. "Don't forget," she started. "You promised me you'd be safe."

"I know," I said. "And I swear I will keep it."

"Good," she said as she pulled away. "You better."

I smiled at her and then reached behind my neck. "But first," I started as I unclasped her aunts necklace and removed it from my neck. "I want you to hold onto this."

She hesitated. "No way," she said. "You need it more than I do."

"No, May." I said. "I want you to hold onto it for me. I cannot fight with jewelry on. So I want you to take care of it until I get back."

She watched me for a moment but let me put it back around her neck.

"I'll take it back when I return, okay?"

She nodded.

I kissed her lips once more before stepping back and bowing a little. "Do *not* do anything stupid while I'm gone."

She let out a laugh.

With that, I smiled at her once more and turned around, climbing onto my chariot.

Once I nodded my head at Lord Renefer, he raised his hand, signaling the army lined up behind us. I pulled on the reigns of my horses and they jerked forward.

And we were off.

We would save Egypt, and nothing would stop us.

Lord Renefer was right about the boats. We could see them, hundreds of them, in the horizon. Of course, they were getting closer now that a couple days had passed.

When we arrived at the coast, the tents had been prepared and the armies were doing their daily training regiments.

Things were looking good.

I was sitting in my tent at a chair in front of a table while Lord Renefer stood across from me. A couple of generals sat around the table, waiting for their orders.

"How do they not see us here?" I asked, stroking my chin as I leaned against one of the arms of my chair. "If we can see them, surely they can see us."

"I am sure they do see us, but there is no possible way they can see the size of our army from that distance."

"They must be fools," I said. "To continue their advance while knowing that we are waiting for them, no matter the size of our army."

"Maybe they don't know, my Pharaoh," one of the generals said.

"I suggest we send a messenger," another general suggested.

"That is a good idea," Lord Renefer said. "We should send a messenger to let them know that we know they are coming and that we are prepared to fight if they continue their advances."

I nodded, crossing my arms and leaning back in my chair. That was a good idea. "If they continue their advances after that, they are truly fools," I said. Plus, my mother did warn me about trying to talk things out. "Maybe we can scare them away."

"But... these people are ruthless," the third general started, "what if they kill the messenger?"

I looked at Lord Renefer, who looked at the man. "I hate to be so heartless, but I think it is worth risking one life over a hundred."

I started to breathe slowly, trying to collect my thoughts.

"On your order, my Pharaoh." The first general said.

I stayed silent for a moment, reflecting on Lord Renefer's words.

"Send the messenger," I said.

They wouldn't dare to hurt him. Not with the entirety of the Egyptian Army sitting in wait for them at their destination.

That would be a death sentence on their part.

The generals and Lord Renefer bowed.

The messengers were two volunteers, brave men who hoped for nothing more but peace. They bowed low for me and when they stood up, I smiled at them.

After telling them the message that they must pass, I patted the shoulders of both the men, who seemed to be shocked by my presence alone.

These were the people I once treated so poorly.

I had to admit, seeing their admiration and their respect for me made my heart feel like someone was squeezing it.

Did I deserve this kind of love?

Even if I had changed... did I really deserve this.

"When you two return, I promise to reward you both greatly for your bravery. Face the Sea People with pride, remembering that the entire army of Egypt, as well as our gods, are standing behind you."

The two men fell down onto their knees once more, bowing in respect before getting up when I told them too.

They got onto the small boat, which they would sail towards the warships of the

Sea People.

For once, I tried to have faith in the wisdom of man.

Those people wouldn't dare to risk thousands of lives, or even their entire army, for whoever their king was, would they?

Any sane general would turn their army around if they knew it was a losing battle.

And thus, we waited. We waited for what felt like forever.

Every time I looked out from my tent, I could still see the advancing ships. They were getting closer and closer. And every inch closer they got, the more anger I felt inside of me.

It was at nightfall that a general ran into my tent, catching me in the middle of my pacing.

"My Pharaoh!" He called.

I was startled by his voice since I was so deep in thought, but when I looked at him, I saw the worry on his face.

"What? What is it?" I asked, rushing over to him.

"The messengers..."

I didn't need him to finish what he was saying. I could just read his face.

I ran past him, outside of my tent and towards the crowd that had gathered near the water.

Everyone moved out of the way when they saw me, making way for me to pass through. When I reached the sandy beach, I could see the small boat drifting back towards us, the massive war ships not that far behind it.

When it landed on the beach, I ran to it, only to see the two messengers laying there... both dead.

I stared in shock for some time as everyone else burst out into whispers.

Lord Renefer joined me and gasped. "Those monsters... to kill the messengers..."

I balled my hands up into fists, feeling a kind of anger inside me that I haven't felt in a *very* long time. "Kill them all," I said angrily, though my voice came out as a whisper.

Lord Renefer looked at me. He hadn't heard me.

"We will *kill* them all!" I yelled, turning to my army. "Archers! Prepare your bows with flames! Those boats are made of wood and we will burn as many of them down before they can reach the shore!"

The soldiers began to run around, preparing for what I said, within moments after the bodies of the two men were removed, the soldiers were lined up against the shores and up on the hills, waiting for the boats to be a good enough distance away to shoot. A couple soldiers had even gotten into small boats themselves, arming themselves with flaming orders in order to sail out and shoot them from a closer range.

"We will make sure they pay for even *thinking* of challenging *us*!" I yelled loudly, inciting a deep cheer from the soldiers.

"Not one of them will make it past the delta. Show no forgiveness as they showed none to our comrades! Kill them *all*!"

I pulled out my bow and loaded it with an arrow that I set on fire.

Standing on my chariot, I shot the first arrow. It pierced through the sky and hit the first wooden ship with ease, causing it to burst into flames within seconds.

The men of my army began to cheer as a mass of arrows began to fire towards the ships.

One by one the ships began to sink and we could see the enemies jumping off in an attempt to save themselves.

And I smiled.

The wizards prophecy would not pass.

I will not let them hurt the innocent.

They will not touch my men.

They will not touch my women.

They will *certainly* not touch my children.

Because as the Pharaoh of Egypt, I would make sure that these people were long dead before they ever got a chance see the beautiful deserts of our land, or to even take a *breath* of the fresh Nile air.

This was their death sentence and I will show *no mercy*.

Hello guys!

I thought I'd end off a serious chapter with something funny:



**P.S. Ignore the accidental inconsistency in the spelling of Neferkiti's name
HAHA**

Hehe! Love y'all!

- Luckycharms! <3



Chapter 43 - [Beauty and Maintaining Maat]

Two weeks had passed. Two weeks of not really knowing what was going on, and probably the two most stressful weeks of my life.

We got good news.

Only good news.

According to the messengers, Atem's army was able to burn down more than half the ships that were sailing towards them before they even reached the show. Most of the survivors of those ships swam to shore but were too tired to fight and were taken as prisoners.

Burning down those ships destroyed the Sea Peoples' chances of winning this battle by almost a hundred percent. They not only lost their ships, but they lost a lot of their weapons too.

That was good news...

Right?

Maybe Atem was right... maybe the reason they lost this war the first time was simply because they didn't see it coming. Maybe the Egyptian Army *was* the greatest army that exists in their time.

So maybe this was an easy victory for them.

But something didn't feel right... and I found myself grasping on to Aunt Maya's necklace more often now.

There wasn't much to do in Ancient Egypt while Atem was gone. Though I

could imagine the Nile Delta being loud and noisy and filled with battle... it was quiet and peaceful here.

Very quiet.

Lord Hepu was clearly trying to keep his promise to Atem. He was constantly keeping a close eye on me and would always ask me how I was doing.

And he carried around this strange staff now.

But I had to admit, Lord Hepu really made me feel comfortable. There was something about him that made me calm.

Plus, there was Atem's mom.

She kept me company for the most part and even took me on a tour of Memphis. I got to meet the so-called peasants of Egypt and it was a mind-blowing experience.

They all seemed so kind and so happy, and they were thrilled to see the queen but also to meet me, which made me very happy.

When I met them, I even got to talk to a couple people... and all I could think of were the times that Atem made reference to them. He was not lying when he talked about humble, happy people who were just always filled with hope.

It was kind of beautiful.

And oh jeeze, were there a lot of cats here. I mean, there were cats in the palace too but something that was strange was that none of these "peasant" cats looked particularly deprived or unhealthy or anything like that. It was obvious that they were taken care of.

Atem wasn't lying when he said his people loved cats. And they clearly loved their dogs too, since I saw a few of those happily running around.

And though all the cats were great... none of them seemed to be enough to fill the void left by my sweet Neferkitti. None of them even looked like her.

Man... did I miss her.

She had become such an important friend to me... and in a way, maybe I even forgot sometimes that she was a cat. She was so smart, and I really would have loved her company right now.

I'm sure everyone here would have loved her without a doubt.

But anyways, I was actually kind of sad when we had to return to the palace, but Atem's mother promised me that we would visit again.

I didn't doubt her promise as well.

Atem's mother was one of the kindest and most honest women I've ever met. In fact... she kind of reminded me of Aunty Maya.

Maybe that's why I liked her so much.

When night came, I slept in Atem's room... though I technically had a room for myself. But I wanted to sleep in the room that Atem stayed in because I felt more comfortable there.

I missed him a lot, obviously.

And if you think about it... since I met him over a year ago, this was the longest we had been apart. We saw each other every day for over a year.

Of course I would miss him now.

But now that I really thought about it... now that I had so much time to myself to think about it... I wondered about this whole situation of going home.

Of seeing my friends and family again.

I wish there was some way of knowing how they were. There wasn't. And when I asked Lord Hepu if he was sure, he reminded me that we were in the past and that everyone I knew hadn't even been born yet.

So no... I could never know if they were alright. But what would happen if I stayed here? Would that change the future? Surely it would!

Even Atem rescuing Egypt from the Sea People would change the future. I

mean, for one, if Atem never disappeared and Egypt never fell... then what would Aunty Maya do her PhD on?

And what would society be like if Egypt never fell? With that kind of power... what if they pushed on for thousands of years? What if they became the new superpowers?

Would there have ever been colonialism? A world ruled by the superpower known as Britain? Would World War I or II have ever happened? Would there even be a Canada or a United States of America? Or would the Natives have rightfully kept their own land because there was no European exploration?

All of these questions... I would never be able to answer. Not if I was stuck here.

I sighed loudly.

The only question I knew the answer to was this: would I miss Atem if I had to leave him?

Yes.

Hell yes.

And I didn't want to leave him.

I managed to fall fast asleep though my mind was filled with confused thoughts and something felt strangely off. It was easier to fall asleep here. The nights were so comforting... super dark and super quiet but not so dark and quiet that it was scary.

I would never hear gangsters driving past my place with their music blasting.

Nor would I hear police sirens wailing, causing me to wonder if Blake was okay.

It was just silence.

But despite this peacefulness, I found myself holding my aunt's necklace when I fell asleep... I always held it when I was nervous.

But it was after I fell asleep that I realized I must have been nervous for good reasons.

In my dream, I was in that place again. The sky was orange and there were pyramids in the distance.

I was in the same place I was a year ago... when Aunty Maya told me to help the Pharaoh who shake my world and change my life forever. (Of course, she didn't actually mention that last part)

I dreamed about Aunty Maya a lot... but none of the dreams were like this. Not since the night before I met Atem. So I knew that this meant something. Even in my dream, I knew that she probably had to tell me something important.

She was standing right in front of me, looking as beautiful as ever. Her eyes were a bright, light shade of brown and her long black hair always curled slightly at the end and fell down to the small of her back.

Her skin was fair and she was tall and thin too. Plus, she always wore this bold, red lipstick.

When I saw her, I started to grin. "Aunt May!"

"Hey, sweetums," her voice was faint, and I could barely hear her though she was standing right in front of me. "We don't have much time to waste."

I hesitated.

Well, a hug would have been nice. I mean, it had been over a year since we got to talk like this.

But she seemed very serious this time around... especially since her smile faded.

"You already know that the man you call the wizard was the one who killed me, right?"

I nodded.

Asshole.

Though it did feel strange to hear her say it the way she did.

"Well, he half lied about that," she said, making my eyes widen. "He told you, May, that he killed me because I would do what you are doing now. He thought I would protect the Pharaoh. But that wasn't the only reason.

"It wasn't?" I asked. What other reason could he even have?

"The other reason was because that day, before I got into that car, I found something in my research. Something that could potentially help Akhenatem if he ever got the opportunity to return and the wizard did *not* want to risk that information being passed along."

My eyes widened even more and my eyebrows rose to the top of my forehead. "What was it?"

"Though, at the time, I still didn't know that it was actually the Sea People who attacked... what I discovered was that Egypt could have still been victorious without knowing about the attack. They *could* have won because that was how powerful their army was. Evidence shows that the Egyptians destroyed the invaders who attacked from the Delta. They encountered no problem from that end... the reason why the Egyptians lost, however, was because the invaders planned a *different* surprise attack."

"A surprise attack..."

"I know now after being here in this world that the *wizard* has cloaked them. They are on their way to sail through Delta as we speak, invisible to our eyes and the eyes of the Akhenatem. That is how they got to Memphis before Akhenatem could get the chance to come back and change things," she said.

"That was how they got to Khamenatem. They ordered Khamenatem to take his forces and join their side against Akhenatem and Egypt. He had to pick that or death. Obviously, Khamenatem picked death and took the execution without a single hesitation. You know quite well that Khamenatem is devoted to his brother, and that part was what your uncle found—"

"Hold on," I said. "Let me get this straight. There is a second army that is cloaked by the wizards magic that's coming through the Delta and making its

way down here?"

"Not yet, but they will enter the Delta very soon. Which is why I came here to tell you. You must pass on this message and help Akhenatem—"

"Aunty Maya," I started, cutting her off. "Please tell me something."

She lowered her shoulders and looked at me, nodding her head.

"Why exactly are you doing this for him?" I asked. "Of course, not that I don't want you too... I'm so happy that you have helped me help him... but *why*?"

That was something I really wanted to know.

Was it simply because she studied him and did her PhD on him? Could it be that simple? Could that be the only reason why her spirit would rise and work so hard to help him?

Aunty Maya took a deep breath. "My love," she started, "Everything this wizard has done, *everything*, is, as strange as this sounds, altering the universe."

My eyebrows rose.

"I have no knowledge of why he is so hateful to the Pharaoh, but the selfish and momentary pleasure he feels from Akhenatem's misery has heavily shaken the steady balance of the universe... or what the Egyptians knew as *maat*."

I knew about *maat*. I had heard the Egyptians here say it many times and Atem had taught me about it.

It was universal order. And balance.

It was Atem's job as the Pharaoh to maintain *maat* and if he failed to do so that means that he failed in his job as the Pharaoh.

And what maintaining *maat* entailed was conducting prayers, making sure the sun rose every morning, and preventing wars. If a war were to start, then the Pharaoh would have to win it to restore Egypt to its natural state of *maat*.

That was what Atem was doing now. Or trying to, at least.

"It may be hard to comprehend, May," Aunty Maya continued, "but what we know during our lives are, in a way, lies created because of the selfishness of this wizard. Egypt was not *meant* to fall. At least not under Akhenatem, and the fall was definitely never meant to be so bloody. Egypt was meant to last another millennia, May."

Yeah.

This was hard to comprehend indeed.

And all I felt when I tried to understand it was fear.

"Our lives are lies?" I repeated. "What does that mean?"

Aunty Maya took a deep breath.

"So if Atem wins this battle and returns Egypt to this ideal state of *maat*... then does that mean we won't exist?"

Aunty Maya shook her head, "I cannot answer that, princess, simply because it's too hard for even me to understand. But what I *can* say, with utmost certainty and utter conviction is that the love we feel... between us and with others... all of that *cannot* be a lie," she said. Her eyes were serious but her smile made my worried heart settle down. "Love is a *powerful* thing. True love can never be a lie. *Never*. The wizards shenanigans couldn't have resulted in creating these relationships that are so powerful and filled with love... only for them to be lies. That is what I hope for and believe to be the proof that once this is all over, you will still be with those you love."

My heart skipped a beat at the thought and I felt my worry ease. Aunty Maya could always make me feel better.

"And May, I truly wish I could continue to talk to you about this but I have to hurry... I have been trying to communicate this message to Atem but... but his anger has taken over."

That snapped me back into my senses. "What?"

"I cannot get through to him, which is why I need you to pass on the message about the hidden ships. If you can find a way for him to get this message fast

enough, they could stop that second fleet as easily as they stopped the first. With that, Egypt would truly be saved, and everything will return to the way it's *supposed* to be."

I opened my mouth to ask what she meant by 'his anger has taken over,' but I suddenly felt a strange pressure on my neck. I couldn't talk.

"Wake up, May," my aunt said, suddenly sounding frantic. "*Wake up!*"

My eyes opened quickly and I choked when I saw the red-eyed wizard standing over me. He had a hand around my neck and was squeezing.

I gasped for breath but kicked him hard enough to push him back. And that was just enough time for me to get out of the bed.

But it wasn't enough time for me to run away. He grabbed me and pushed me against the wall this time, choking me again.

"No!" I gasped. "Help!"

My voice was in no way loud enough.

But just as I felt the pressure in my head rising to an unbearable point, the wizard was blown away from me before smashing into a wall and turning into sand.

When I collapsed onto my knees, I was able to see Lord Hepu standing at the door, holding his staff out in front of him. There was another unfamiliar man with him but before I could figure out who he was, I found myself too busy coughing like crazy.

Lord Hepu ran to me. "Are you okay, May?"

I nodded. "Yeah... what—"

"Was that who you called the wizard?"

I nodded again.

But when I looked up, I saw the man who was with him standing and waiting at

the door. For some strange reason, he looked a little bit like Atem, except older and larger. He had larger muscles, was slightly taller and had a beard on his chin. And he was handsome... older, but very handsome. "Who is that?" I asked, feeling a strange feeling inside me. It was a feeling of calm, which was strange seeing as I was almost choked to death a second ago.

Lord Hepu looked behind him and then returned his gaze to me. "So you can see him?"

I nodded, not taking my eyes off that man.

And then Lord Hepu smiled. "That is the Pharaoh's father. He is the one who saved you, he was trying to wake you but you were in a deep sleep, so he came to me and told me you were in danger," he said. "It is easier for me to see spirits since I am the High Priest."

I gawked for a second but when I looked back in the direction of Atem's father, he was gone.

A ghost?

No... a spirit.

Like Aunty Maya.

I looked down at the ring that Atem's mother gave me, realizing now more than ever that magic and spirits and all that kind of stuff was real.

Very real.

Atem's father had saved me, and I was strangely flattered.

Lord Hepu then helped me up, "what on earth happened?"

Right at that moment, everything in my dream suddenly came back to me. The memories made me gasp, shocking Lord Hepu. "We have to go to Atem!"

"What?" he asked.

After letting him help me up onto my feet, I explained my entire dream to him,

shocking him to a point where he clearly just didn't believe me.

"To conceal an entire fleet? That kind of strength is unbelievable," Lord Hepu said.

"You have to believe me," I said. "The last time my aunt came in my dream was when Atem was cursed and sent to my world. If it weren't for her, I would never have been able to help Atem." And now she was asking me to help him again.

Lord Hepu let out a breath before shaking his head. "Alright," he said. "It is better to be safe than sorry. I will head north and inform the Pharaoh—"

"I *have* to come with you!" I said, figuring that he meant he was going to go on his own.

"Absolutely not," he said firmly.

"But I *have* to."

"The Pharaoh left me in charge of protecting you," he said. "And protecting you does not entail taking you right into the middle of the battlefield."

Okay. So he had a good point. But so did I. "What if Aunty Maya has something else she has to say! I'm the only one she can talk to!" I mean, I think I was... assuming that what she said about Atem was right. "What happens if she says something else that's important? What happens then? How will we get it to Atem if I'm over here and you're over there?"

Lord Hepu stared at me for a moment, clearly trying to come up with a counter argument.

But like I said before, I had a good point.

And he knew it. So he sighed and then nodded. "Fine... so long as you agree that once the news has been passed on, we will *leave* immediately," he said. "Your presence could distract our king."

"Fine," I said. "I agree. Let's go!"

Lord Hepu was definitely not too happy with my desire to come but despite that

he got a horse ready to take the both of us.

However, his preparations caught the attention of Atem's mother.

Lord Hepu originally didn't want her to know about it, but she was adamant about finding out and he knew better than to lie to the Queen of Egypt.

She looked horrified, and then she rushed off. When she returned, she was holding the reigns of another horse.

Lord Hepu sighed loudly. "My Queen, *please*—"

"You have no need to worry about me," she said. "I can handle myself."

"Queen Satiah, please listen to me," Lord Hepu begged. "It is *dangerous*."

"My dear High Priest," she started, "you must remember that not only have I survived three assassination attempts, but I've also sat by the side of my husband as he died of a dreaded illness, witnessed the murder of many of my family members and watched my son grow up to be a monster for a little while, unable to do anything," she climbed up onto her horse, glare on my face.

"And do not forget that I gave birth to a child," she added. "All you men think you are stronger than us women simply because you are bigger. Try feeling the pain of childbirth. Then we will see who is stronger."

Despite the fact that I agreed with Lord Hepu and didn't really want her to join us... I couldn't help but grin.

Wow. Atem's mom was a total badass.

What a woman.

It was very easy to forget everything she had gone through, but though she may be so kind and gentle... she was also unbelievably strong.

"I will not sit by and watch my son and my step son, as well as the soldiers of my country, be fooled by a cruel and cowardly wizard. I am their queen. If there is *anything* I could do to help, let it be to make a couple people smile or treat the injured... I will do it."

Lord Hepu seemed just as shocked but amazed as I was, and so he sighed loudly and then nodded. "Alright," he said. "You are right."

Atem's mother nodded before her horse started to move forward. She was already on her way before Lord Hepu could say another word.

I looked at Lord Hepu, who had this hopeless, depressed expression on his face. "Pharaoh is going to have my head."

I chuckled and let him help me onto the horse that we were going to share. "Don't worry, I'll make sure he knows that we pretty much forced you to do it."

He gave me a funny smile, one I had never seen on his face before, and then got onto the horse in front of me. "It is a three day journey," he said. "Due to the severity of this news, turning back is not an option, my dear. Are you sure—"

"Positive," I said firmly. "We need to help Atem."

Lord Hepu nodded, signaling his horse forward.

And we were off, not too far behind Atem's mother.

Lord Hepu wasn't lying. It was definitely a long journey and all I could really say was that people make horseback riding seem so easy.

My butt hurt like crazy a couple hours in but I had to take it like a champ because Atem and his army were more important than this pain in my butt.

How do people do this on a regular basis?

But anyhow, that wasn't important. What was important was getting to Atem, not worrying about the whole 'our lives are lies' thing, trusting what Aunty Maya said about love and figuring out what she was talking about when it came to Atem and his anger.

He's too angry?

What did that even mean?

Of course he would be angry. He was fighting in a war, trying to save his people

from other people who wanted to murder them. He *had* to be angry.

All I could really think that Aunty Maya really meant was that he was turning mean again... but how was that possible? How could a year worth of work on his personality just vanish?

No... it probably wasn't that.

It couldn't be.

But maybe I was just lying to myself to try and mask the nervousness that was filling my stomach as I gripped on to my aunt's necklace.

Who was I kidding?

Something bad was going to happen.

Something really bad.



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Chapter 44 - [Last Act of Kindness and the Pharaoh]

We were victorious. At least, that was what I deemed us to be. With the sight of the burning ships belonging to the People of the Sea as well as the hundreds of soldiers we had arrested as prisoners of war, the only conclusion I could possibly come to was that we were victorious.

But I couldn't deny that something felt off.

In some ways, this entire battle felt too easy. Of course, we had lost a couple lives, but not nearly as many as would have happened if the People of the Sea had won this battle.

I sat in my tent, stroking my beardless chin while deep in thought.

Maybe there would be a second wave of soldiers. I thought. Or a spy within our own ranks?

My thoughts had consumed my mind, making it easy to not notice Khamenatem rush into the tent.

"Brother!" He called loudly, surprising me.

When I looked at him, I was forced to let out a small smile to in some ways reciprocate the grin he had on his face.

He put down onto the desk in front of me one of the two jugs of beer that I didn't realize he was holding. "Let us celebrate this victory!"

I found myself hesitating, and he noticed my hesitation.

"What is it, brother?" He asked, sitting in the seat in front of me. "Are you not

happy?"

I took a deep breath, "didn't this all seem *too* easy, Khamen?"

He raised an eyebrow.

"The wizard had planned so much, he gave me so much trouble, only for me to fix it all by winning this battle with such ease?"

"Maybe he simply underestimated the power of our army, brother."

I shook my head. "I do not think we should demobilize yet. I think we should stay here for a little longer," I looked down at the beer he brought for me, "and I think we should maintain our senses in case we need to make sudden decisions."

Khamenatem looked a little disappointed, however, he also looked like he understood. "You were right the first time, brother... so I shall take your word this time too," he said. "Shall I inform the men to hold back on their celebrations?"

I nodded, "yes."

"I will allow them to know that Pharaoh promises to reward them with double the alcohol once it's all over," he winked as he stood up, holding both the jugs of beer again.

I smiled, but decided not to say no to that.

The men deserved it.

Plus, once this was all over... I think I deserved it too. Though, maybe not double. Quadruple sounds better.

Enough to finally relax a little and pass out in drunkenness.

I think *I* deserved that much.

And just as Khamenatem turned around to leave, we were both startled by the sound of rumbling and the sudden shaking of the land.

I stood up as Khamenatem dropped both the jugs in surprise. He turned to face

me with wide eyes but as the shaking ended, we both stared while the sky suddenly darkened.

A commotion erupted outside the tent and Khamenatem shook his head in disbelief. "Brother, I always deemed you to be intelligent... but this is... you were right. You must truly be some sort of god—"

"We have no time for praises, Khamen," I said as I ran around the table and threw my quiver and bow over my shoulder before making my way out of the tent.

My men were running around in a panic, and when I looked up at the sky the sun had been completely covered by dark clouds.

The sudden darkness was almost similar to night, but it was obvious that Ra was still trying to shine through, to protect us from the darkness. His rays were bright enough to let out small blotches of light... enough to prevent pitch darkness. But other than that, the sky was black, and it was no wonder that the men were in a panic.

"Order, *order!*" Lord Renefer shouted before he turned and ran towards me. "My Pharaoh, what is this?"

"This has to be the work of the wizard," I said. Who else could have the power to cover the light of Ra? Probably the same man who had the power to send me three thousand years into the future.

"*Akhenatem!*"

The voice that shouted my name was deep, spiteful and angry.

And I knew exactly who it was.

I turned around and standing alone in the distance was the red-eyed wizard. He had a cloak over his shoulders and his eyes had that usual red glow to them. The hood of his cloak did not cover his head so I could not only see his bald head, but also the glare on his face.

His angry glare turned into an equally angry grin, "dear Pharaoh," he said, "shall we finally end this?"

I pulled my sword out from its sheath and held it in front of me in defense. "Stay back," I said to both Lord Renefer and Khamenatem. "This has nothing to do with the both of you."

"Don't be a fool, brother!" Khamenatem argued, making me angry. "You *need* our help. This man is a monster!"

"The Prince is right," Lord Renefer added. "You need—"

"Do not forget, Khamenatem and Lord Renefer, that I am still Pharaoh," I said. "If I say to step back, you will step back."

Khamenatem clearly didn't understand the extent of my seriousness, "but—"

"Do not disobey me!" I growled as I turned around quickly and startled both my brother and the Lord a couple steps back.

Khamenatem looked shocked... offended even.

But I could not care less at that moment.

I started to walk towards the grinning man. "No," he started. "Actually I'd rather they joined the battle. It wouldn't really matter if you think about it, Akhenatem. They will be dying today no matter what."

"Silence yourself, sorcerer," I yelled. "I've had enough of you."

"You walk towards me with no fear in your eyes," he said. "You are a fool."

"I've knocked you down many times before."

"That was in the future... when my powers were at the lowest levels," he said.

"Here... I now possess the strength of the *gods* themselves. With that meddling *girl* out of the picture, with *maat* completely unraveled, I can snap you in two as if you were a twig!"

I stopped walking. "What is *that* supposed to mean?"

"It means that before, when I cursed you, I did it because, I admit, I did not have the power to kill you. You were protected by the gods and the spirits since you

were the Pharaoh they *chose*," he said, his head tilting slightly to the left. "But now that I've ended the life of your silly little bride... her death in this time has caused *maat* to unravel and my power to *grow*. Nothing can protect you now."

My eyes widened in shock.

No.

That was impossible.

May was not dead.

I trusted Lord Hepu with every bit of my spirit. He was the High Priest of Amun, selected by my father. He was powerful in his own way... he wouldn't let that happen.

This man was trying to distract me.

"I will not fall for your petty tricks," I wouldn't.

"Well, in that case, you can meet her in the underworld when I'm done with you." As soon as he finished his sentence he pounced forward at an unbelievable speed.

I held my sword in front of me as he smashed his staff into it with a strength that pushed me back a couple meters.

It was inhumane.

And his speed gave me no chance to attack, I was simply forced to defend.

After pushing me back once more the wizard broke out into a hysterical laugh.

He laughed and laughed until he decided he was not going to anymore. "Ah! This *power*!" He looked at his hand as he said it. "How pleasing it is to me to see you cower in the face of it!"

"Your power is from your deals with evil spirits," I said. "That is nothing to be proud of."

He laughed again. "Evil? Huh! You can relate to that, can you not Akhenatem?"

Now I let out a laugh, and though mine was short, it was as equally unfriendly as his. "That is well behind me."

"Oh Akhenatem, how foolish can you be?" He asked. "Do you really believe you have *changed*? Is that what you're telling everyone?"

Suddenly, for some strange reason, the red in his eyes faded and his skin turned a couple shades fairer. And to my surprised, he immediately looked like a completely different person. Completely different... but familiar.

"Do you really think, Akhenatem, that spending a little over a year in a cramped home with an annoying, yet kind hearted girl is enough to wipe away your evil?" He asked. "Did you really think that would make you anything like *our* loving and kind hearted father?"

My eyebrows rose and I stayed silent for a moment before I let out a breath, "*what?*"

And as he laughed like a maniac once more, I finally started to realize why he looked familiar.

He looked like my father...

Like *me*.

It didn't take me long after that to put two and two together.

"Tudhaliyas?" I questioned in utter shock.

For the first time since he got here, his smile faded. "Ah, it seems you have not forgotten me then."

I could hear the shocked voices coming from behind me. "My Pharaoh," I heard Lord Renefer call. "How could—"

"Another lie your supposedly pure hearted Pharaoh has kept from you all."

"Brother..." Khamenatem called. I could hear the sorrow in his voice. He felt betrayed.

The grin had returned onto his face. "Oh, look Khamenatem. Look at how Akhenatem has betrayed you so."

I took a deep breath before feeling my glare deepen. "Silence," I hissed. "Don't you dare speak to him!"

"Why not?" Tudhaliyas asked in a humored tone. "Why should I not talk to him? We are *all* brother's are we not?"

"You are *not* my brother!" Khamenatem shouted, loosing his temper. That usually never happened with Khamenatem.

But I could not blame him.

How could I?

This was Tudhaliyas. This was the son of the woman who killed his mother, poisoned her. The son of the Hittite woman who ruined our lives. The son who I was supposed to have had imprisoned for their entire lives before I murdered all of her family in Egypt.

The son of the woman who made me who I was known to be.

My step-brother.

"Your mother killed my mother!" Khamenatem shouted, walking forward. "My mother was innocent, she had done *nothing*—"

I held my arm out, stopping him from walking forward and cutting off. It was too dangerous for him to get too close to that man.

He looked at me, "brother, he *escaped*?" He asked. "He *escaped* and you did not tell me? Please... *please* tell me you simply did not know!"

"Lies!" Tudhaliyas laughed some more. "All lies! Oh how humorous it is to see this."

"What is he *talking* about, brother?" Khamenatem asked.

I let out the breath that I had not known I was holding. "Stay back,

Khamenatem—"

"Tell me the truth, Akhenatem," Khamen said, using my full name to prove his anger. "What does he mean when he says you are telling lies?"

"Tell him, *brother*," Tudhaliyas said, still grinning.

I felt my anger rush to my head. "I never put him in prison," I said, turning my head and glaring at Tudhaliyas. "That was the lie."

Khamenatem scoffed and stepped back, "*what?*"

"He was a *child* when it all happened," I countered as I looked back at him. "I deemed him innocent—"

"Clearly you were *wrong*!" Khamenatem hissed in anger.

I turned around and pushed Khamenatem back. "Stay out of this," I yelled. "Just stand back and let me deal with him." He had all the reason to be angry with me... but now was not the time. We could discuss it all once this was over.

"You let him free?" Khamenatem yelled back. "He was the one who handed the poison to my mother!"

"Under the orders of his own mother—"

"Do not *defend* him, Akhenatem—"

"Khamenatem, I order you to stay back, not as your *elder* brother but as your *Pharaoh*!" I growled.

"You think—"

"Seize him!" I yelled, looking at the nearest guards. "Hold him back!"

The two nearest guards grabbed him and pulled him back as he tried to fight against it.

Eventually he stopped fighting and just stood there and glared at me.

And then I turned to Tudhaliyas. "How could *you*?" I asked. "I *spared* you. I let

you free and this is the appreciation I get—"

"Letting me *free*?" Tudhaliyas asked. "You call banishing me to a temple in Nubia to train as a priest *free*?"

"I showed you *kindness* when your family did nothing but destroy mine—"

The man who was my brother laughed hysterically. "Kindness? You showed me *kindness*? You killed every family member I had in Egypt. You imprisoned my mother and you banished me! Me! The son of the Pharaoh, *just* as you are. Is that kindness to you?"

I shook my head in disbelief. "I went against the advice of all of my court members. All of them, even my *mother* advised me against letting you go. My mother... one of the kindest women in all of Egypt! They *all* told me to lock you up with your mother to be safe from you retaliating in revenge once you were older... to be safe from you doing exactly *this*. Yet I lied to all of them but the High Priest and let you go. Letting you free was the last good thing I did before I lost all the kindness I had left in me. And I did this *because* you were also the son of our father... and a *child*."

I still remembered it.

Lord Hepu was the only one who knew about it, though he too disagreed with my decision.

I remember him, standing with a group of three priests who were going to take him south. He was fairer than most Egyptian boys and looked more like a Hittite, however he had the sidelock of youth, which signified that he was Egyptian born and still a young boy.

I remember telling him that he was not to blame for what had happened and that I was sending him to where he was going for his own safety. I told him his mother had made a grave mistake but I would not punish him as well.

I remember believing that this was exactly what my father would have wanted. Tudhaliyas was his son too... equally his son as I was. I thought it was the right thing to do.

It was the last right thing I did.

And then everything changed. My life fell apart and I turned into someone who I now abhorred.

Yet despite all of that, he had grown up to hate me and live to make my life miserable?

My brother was the one who cursed me?

The one who killed May's aunt?

The one who tried to ruin me?

The one who I betrayed my most trusted friends and Khamenatem for...

My brother?

"Do not act all high and mighty," he said. "You did me no help. I would have been happier locked away with my mother in a prison cell. I could have kept her sane. Yet I was forced to see her lose her sanity month by month when I went to see her."

He was not supposed to see her. Maybe this too was her fault... maybe she was the one who had conditioned him into acting this way.

"She told me everything," he continued. "Everything about what you did to her—"

"What *I* did to her?" I scoffed. "She has filled your heart with lies."

"Though there is *one* thing I could thank you for, Akhenatem," he said, ignoring me, "and that is that if you hadn't sent me to a temple with those priests than I may have never learned how to manipulate magic. If I hadn't done that then none of this would have been possible."

I closed my eyes for a moment before opening them again, still unable to believe that my own brother who I had been merciful to had chosen to do this to me.

"How many innocent lives have you destroyed while trying to get your *revenge*?"

"Enough," he said. "Nothing can get in the way of my revenge."

"You killed May's aunt—"

"She was a nosey bitch. She would have been in my way so she deserved it."

"She was innocent."

"But a nuisance nonetheless. Besides, if it's your lovers' feelings about her that you're worried about than you have no reason to fret. At this point she has probably already reached her aunt in the underworld."

"That's not going to work. You cannot convince me that she is dead. I know she isn't."

"Are you sure?" He asked with a grin. "That is not what it looked like when I choked the life out of her. She called for your help but it is too sad you were not able to reach her."

I started to grind my teeth together. "Liar!"

"Oh, I'm not lying. That Lord Hepu was not as good at protecting her as you hoped he would be. He was too slow. She was long dead when he reached her."

I pulled my bow from over my shoulder and loaded it with an arrow. Pointing it directly at him, I glared. "You are testing my patience Tudhaliyas. If you are going to try and kill me then come. I will ignore the fact that you too are the son of my father and send you to the underworld to be judged by the gods."

Tudhaliyas laughed. "There he is," he said. "That's the man I came to fight."

I narrowed my eyes.

"I don't want to fight this lie... thus new, weak, righteous and kind version of Akhenatem—"

"Oh trust me, I am anything but kind."

"That's it. I want to fight the man I cursed. Now *that* would be more entertaining."

"Well I'm sorry to disappoint you but that man does not exist anymore."

He laughed hysterically again, and it was beginning to get aggravating. "How simple minded you are, Akhenatem!" He said. "I have already told you, brother, that a little dead girl cannot change who you are!"

"She is not dead!"

"A simple girl cannot *change* you, foolish Pharaoh! All she did was help you take all your anger and fears and hatred and seal it up behind a wall in your heart. A wall as fragile as papyrus," he said. "A wall that is as easy to destroy as one, two, three—"

He snapped his fingers at the count of three and it felt as if I had been stabbed in the chest. I gasped loudly, releasing the arrow in the direction of Tudhaliyas but missing him before I dropped the bow and grasped my chest with my hands.

When I looked at my hands I expected blood.

But there was nothing.

A sharp pain filled my body and I felt heaviness in my heart, and a darkness in my body which I had not felt before.

"Brother!" I heard Khamenatem yell.

"My Pharaoh!" Lord Renefer shouted after.

From the corner of my eye I could see them begin to run towards me, but at that moment Tudhaliyas waved his staff. Both Khamenatem and Lord Renefer looked as if they had smashed into an invisible wall. They stared in shock, holding the invisible wall and banging against it.

"Brother!" Khamenatem shouted again.

"No one gets in the way," Tudhaliyas said, his smile had faded and he glared at me as he walked towards me.

Still grasping my chest and struggling for breath, I glared back. "What do you think you are *doing*?"

"It's that easy, Akhenatem," he said. "That easy for it all to come back. You

never *changed*. That was all a lie you told yourself to make yourself feel better."

"No it was *not*," I growled, my voice raspy from the pain.

The pain was excruciating. It felt like someone was twisting the knife after stabbing it into my chest.

"You fell in love with a pathetic little girl who you *knew* you could never be with," he said when he reached me. "Not with your evil thoughts... not in that world. She could never understand how you really felt. What you really were like. So you pushed the thoughts away, hiding them in the farthest corner of your mind. That is not changing. That is *hiding* from your true self. You never changed."

"Silence!" I felt like I was suffocating, gasping for breath but trying not to fall forward onto my knees.

"And it was all pointless in the end," the wizard said. "Because in the end she died."

I tried to ignore him.

But whatever he was doing was working.

It was working from the inside out.

I could feel the rage I once felt returning as the horrible memories returned.

The memories of my father's death, of my relatives dropping like flies because of poison and arrows and the blades of swords, of Khamenatem's misery once his mother was killed, of my own mother almost being murdered three times.

I could remember that feeling... that feeling of shutting my sense of reasoning off. Shutting it off and then ordering the execution of all of Tudhaliyas's relatives... trying to dissociate myself from the blood and the begging and the anger. And then maintaining this no mercy rule for almost the next decade of my life.

I never realized how horrible of a feeling it was.

Though maybe it was because my turning into that man was a slow process.

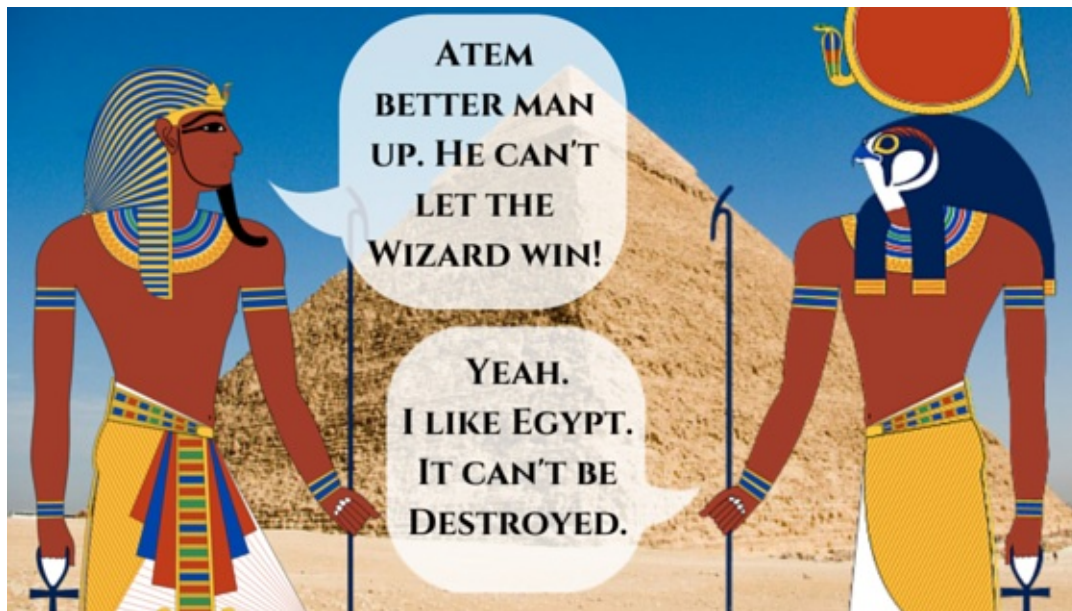
But this time, feeling all of it come back to me at once was agonizing.

And once I could not hold it back any longer, I dropped my head back and let out a shout that came from deep within me. It was loud and long and by the time I had no breath left, the pain had stopped.

I looked back at the wizard, and then felt an uncontrollable anger... a rage worse than I had felt before. After all, I had many more reasons to be angry now.

And then everything went black.

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Chapter 45 - [Beauty and the Evil Returned]

I saw tents. And hundreds and hundreds of people under a sky that had darkened suddenly. Then there was a loud, long, deep shout.

I knew instantly that it was Atem.

The sound made my heart race in a panic and created a feeling in me that made me feel sick. And the closer we got, the more scared I felt.

He was in danger.

Why else would he shout like that?

And though Atem's mother, Lord Hepu and I were riding the two horses straight towards it, all I could think of was what I was going to be able to do to help him.

I wanted to help him.

Whatever was happening, I wanted to *do* something.

But I felt so hopeless.

I was just a regular girl for crying out loud! What could I possibly do to help save the King of Egypt from an all-powerful wizard?

The feeling was dreadful.

But despite that, I knew I had to try *something*.

"Clear the way!" Lord Hepu yelled as he rode the horse we were on in front of the Queen.

The soldiers who were crowding around and looking panicked began to run off, creating a path for us to ride through.

And then we could see Atem.

I couldn't see him that well, seeing as I still didn't have my glasses or contacts, but what I could see was that he was just standing there, frozen.

The man standing not too far from him looked at us in shock. For a moment, he looked unfamiliar but then with the wave of his familiar staff, the red eyes returned and his skin darkened a couple shades.

The wizard.

Lord Hepu pulled the horses reins, suddenly stopping it and making me hold tightly onto him to stop myself from flying off.

When he got off the horse I heard the wizard laugh, "I never imagined you to be so foolish, Lord Hepu." He looked like he was about to do something with his staff, but Lord Hepu was faster.

Lord Hepu pointed his staff at the wizard, causing him to suddenly look like something had grabbed his entire body.

The wizard gasped, dropping his staff and as he looked like he was trying to fight away the massive, invisible hand, Lord Hepu gripped his own staff with both his hands.

"What's wrong with him?" I asked as I jumped off the horse, almost falling onto my face in the process. The Queen however, got off much more elegantly despite the distress on her face

Khamenatem, who had rushed towards us when we arrived, looked at me in shock. "What are you—"

"What's wrong with Atem?" I asked again, cutting him off.

"I'm unsure," Khamen said, looking utterly worried. "The man said something about returning his evil—"

I had already started to run towards Atem before he could finish.

Aunty Maya was right.

The wizard was messing around in Atem's head.

I *wasn't* going to let that go on for much longer.

The only way he'd get to Atem was over *my* dead body.

"You cannot go to him!" Khamenatem yelled after me. "There is a barrier—"

And before he could finish I had smashed into something that felt like an invisible wall.

I gasped, reaching out and touching the invisible wall. "No," I said to myself.

And then I pushed it.

I pushed as hard as I could.

I had no idea how this whole magic thing worked but I had to figure it out. Now.

I had to get to Atem. Something was wrong and though I had no idea what I was going to do to help him, I *had* to do *something*.

So I pushed.

I let out a shout and pushed as hard as I possibly could.

I pushed and I pushed and I pushed and suddenly, I knew Aunty Maya was helping. Her Ankh necklace began to glow for just a moment, and then I fell forward.

When I opened my eyes, I was on my knees and on the floor... closer to Atem.

And so I got up and ran.

"Stupid girl!" The wizard yelled. "Today will be the day you finally *die*! And then *I* will win! "

I was going to ignore him and keep running to Atem. But I froze in my tracks and shot him a glare.

That time I ran away after he told me he killed my aunt was not a long time ago... and Atem telling me that I shouldn't have ran away was still fresh in my mind. He told me that I would have felt a lot better if I had slapped him hard across the face... and though I had done it once, right before he sent us here... I was still not satisfied.

And now I wanted to hit him more than ever.

I knew I wouldn't have any other chance aside from now. Lord Hepu was holding him down and I had to hurry. So I ran towards him. I continued running though I heard the protests of some of the people who were watching me, especially Lord Hepu.

But I kept going. And when I reached him, I closed my eyes for a moment, honing in my inner bad-ass. I imagined all the best female bad-asses I could think of, like Tsunade, and Rosie the Riveter, and Regina from Once Upon a Time and Black Widow and Riza Hawkeye and all the other awesome females who I needed to think of for inspiration.

When I opened my eyes, I saw the wizard looking at me with a look of disbelief.

But I cracked my knuckles right before I let out a loud shout and sucker punched him right across the face.

"Asshole!" I shouted right after.

I definitely surprised him, but I felt a rush of excitement as he spit out blood and looked at me with a furious glare.

That's right.

You just got your face broken by a girl.

But that was all I had time for. After shooting him another glare, I turned around and ran to Atem. Though I wanted to punch him a hundred times more, Atem was the priority.

And when I finally reached him, I gasped.

He was just standing there, frozen. Staring at nothing.

But the look in his eyes... it looked almost exactly like that frightening look I saw in him the first night I met him.

No.

It looked worst.

I grabbed his shoulders and shook him, "Atem!" I shouted. "Snap out of it!"

"Kill her!" The wizard yelled, probably more angry now than ever. "Kill her with your own hands! Are you going to allow a foreign girl to touch you? To touch you and call you by that name? Kill her and let me *win*!"

He sounded more crazy than usual but I forced myself to ignore him.

"Atem—"

Before I could finish, there was a sudden, sharp pain in my chest as Atem flung his arm into it, pushing me back so hard that I fell.

Wow.

A man had just hit me.

And instead of doing the logical thing, which was to get out of the situation and probably call 911 or something, I got up, glared at him rather ferociously and ran back. "Snap out of it!" I yelled again, gripping tightly onto the same arm he hit me with as he continually tried to push me away. "You're *better* than this!"

"Don't bother trying!" The wizard yelled. "He has passed the point of understanding. He can't even hear you. In fact, he doesn't even know who you are—"

"May!" Lord Hepu called, interrupting him, "I cannot... hold him... much longer!"

The wizard laughed some more.

I pushed Atem's arm away and grabbed his face in my hands. "Look at me, Atem!" I yelled. Maybe if I yelled he would hear me. "It's me... May! I know you can hear me, Atem. You can't let the wizard win! You can fight it! You're better than this! You are *not* evil! I *know* you!"

I gasped as he pushed me away again, causing me to trip over the dress I was wearing and fall onto my butt. After wincing in pain, I looked up and let out a breath as Atem pulled his sword out of his sheath and pointed it right at me.

"Yes!" The wizard laughed. "Yes! Kill her! Run her through!"

My breathing hastened as he stepped a step closer and held the tip of the sword right under my chin. It was so close that he was able to lift my head up to look at him with it.

"Atem..." I wasn't yelling anymore, I was begging. And I felt like I was going to cry. "Atem... please. It's *me*. You can fight this. I *know* you're better than this."

He just stared at me with that empty, cold look in his eyes. And I just couldn't help but wonder if this was how he looked at those people he judged once before? Before he changed his ways?

But I shook the thought away.

"Don't listen to the wizard. He doesn't know you. He doesn't know you the way I do!" I tried. "And don't look at me like that you idiot! Snap out of it! Don't make me punch you like I punched him!"

And just then, I saw his scrunched eyebrows twitch and his arm start to shake.

I stared at him for a moment as he stared back at me while his arm began to shake uncontrollably.

After a moment, I saw his grip on the hilt of his sword loosen and without thinking, I grabbed the blade of the sword with my bare hand, cutting my hand but not caring.

I pulled it right out of his hand and tossed it behind me.

And when that was out of the picture and I knew for sure I was safe, I got back

up quickly and wrapped my arms around his chest.

I hugged him tightly, feeling the tears escape. "C'mon, Atem, we need to defeat the wizard *together*," I whispered against his chest. "Come back to me."

I could feel his entire body shaking... twitching as he tried to fight it off. And to top it off, his body was extremely warm, like fever warm. It was kind of scary.

I pulled away from the hug and held his face in my hands. He still had that look in his eyes.

I wish I could just punch it out of him or something.

I wish I could do something.

But I knew this was *inside* him.

What could I possibly do to fight off something that was *inside* him?

I stared back at him for a short moment and then kissed his lips. It was the only thing I could think of. The only thing I could think of to get to him faster.

Lord Hepu wouldn't be able to hold back the wizard for too long.

His body was stiff under mine. At first, he was still frozen, though shaking slightly. But after a moment, the heaviness in my heart vanished when I felt him kiss me back.

I heard the relieved sighs of the people around us and that made me feel relieved too. So I wrapped my arms around his neck and hugged him tightly, deepening my kiss and ignoring the wizard who was shouting his protest in the background.

When I pulled away, I looked at Atem with a smile.

He looked back at me, the blank and frightening look fading and his usual look returning.

And when he looked like he was completely back to his normal self, he closed his eyes tightly for a moment before sighing. "You *idiot*."

I let out a laugh before hugging him tightly, pressing my face against his neck

and praying to whatever gods there were that nothing else would happen to him.

This time he hugged me back.

After a moment, I pulled away and removed Aunty Maya's necklace from around my neck. "Take this," I said, putting the necklace back on him. "You need this, hopefully it'll help to make sure you don't let something stupid like this happen to you again."

He rolled his eyes but didn't argue.

However, once it was on him, he wasted no time. "What on *earth* do you think you are doing here?" As he said it, he grabbed my hand and looked at the wound.

I pulled my hand away. "Well it's a good thing I was here!" I argued back, "look what would have happened to you if I wasn't!"

"That doesn't matter! Do you know how dangerous it is for you to be here? You could have gotten yourself killed! What if I killed you—"

"My Pharaoh!" We both heard.

We turned around and saw Lord Hepu struggling to hold the wizard down with his staff. The Queen was doing her best to support him by rubbing his back but it wasn't helping.

Atem pushed me behind him before grabbing the sword I had tossed away and running towards the wizard. He swung his sword, slashing through the chest of the wizard just as he broke free of Lord Hepu's hold.

The wizard jumped backwards, blood everywhere.

I covered my mouth with my hands, even the bloody one. I was witnessing a real battle... and it was probably going to get worse.

And though the wizard didn't look even close to dead, he clearly had weakened as he stumbled back, grasping the open wound on his chest.

Atem was able to slash his sword continuously at the wizard, though he blocked

it with his staff. He didn't seem to have any weapons so unless he used his magic Atem had the upper hand.

"Remove the seal, you *bastard* priest!" The wizard yelled.

A seal?

I looked at Lord Hepu and saw that though he wasn't holding the wizard down, he was still doing *something* since he was holding out his staff and it was glowing.

He must have been weakening the wizard's powers.

Wow... Lord Hepu *was* strong.

But just as I felt a little hint of hope, I suddenly remembered why I was here in the first place.

Ugh! *Stupid May!* How could you forget!

"Atem!" I called loudly, trying to get his attention.

He ignored me.

"Atem! *Atem!*" I called again. "Listen to me!"

"May," Atem called back, "I am... *kind of...* busy!" He responded as he continued to fight the wizard back.

"Aunty Maya came in my dream again!" I said, hoping he was listening, though he was *busy*. "She said that the Sea People are trying to trick you by using the wizards powers to cloak a lot of boats while they sail down the Delta and into Egypt! That's how they took over so easily the first time! You need to send your soldiers to deal with them while you deal with the wizard!"

The wizard began to growl in anger and I saw Lord Hepu seem like he too had forgotten.

And so he moved his staff away from the wizard and within less than a second, he waved it in the direction of the Nile.

Almost instantly, the sky blurred and then what looked like the calm delta and river turned into one that was filled with hundreds and hundreds of boats!

Aunty Maya was right!

And we had gotten here just in time! The boats hadn't gone far!

But in the few seconds that this happened, it was clear that whatever seal was on the wizard had been broken.

The wizard pushed Atem back and pointed his staff at Lord Hepu, and after a gasp that sounded like he had been punched in the gut, he flew a couple meters back until he slammed into a group of soldiers.

But while this was going on, Atem had shouted "No!" before taking that moment of the wizard being distracted to his advantage. He thrust the sword right into the wizard's chest.

The wizard choked and coughed out blood before Atem pushed the sword deeper into him and pinned him to the ground. "Stay *here*."

I gasped loudly, covering my mouth with my hands again. But before I could react, Atem turned around, ran to me, grabbed my hand and taking me to Lord Hepu.

As we ran to him, Atem shouted his orders to his soldiers. "Men, you know what to do! Burn down those ships! Do not let them get any farther than they already have!"

The soldiers shouted their agreements before half of them ran with their bows and arrows and the others jumped on to horses.

I saw Lord Renefer, who exchanged a nod with Atem before he too got onto a horse and rushed off.

"Lord Hepu!" Atem shouted as we reached him.

Atem's mother was already there, holding Lord Hepu in her arms, and Khamenatem was there too.

"I'm... fine," Lord Hepu said before coughing.

Both Atem and I knelt down in front of him and I took his hand in mine. He looked okay... which made me feel relieved.

"My Pharaoh... you *need* to finish him off—"

"I'm sorry," Atem suddenly said. "I'm sorry to all of you. To you all and the other court members. When we get home... I want you to pass this message on to the other court members as well. And I want you to thank Lord Ahmose was ruling Egypt while I was here... and Lady Hema and Lady Taka as well, for watching over all our duties in our absence."

I looked at Atem with shock.

"My son," his mother started. "Why are you saying this? You can come and thank them yourself."

Atem hesitated before letting out a short chuckle... "It is if... if I forget," he said. "I don't think I thanked you all for your forgiveness and your trust in me—"

"The Queen is right... my Pharaoh. You can tell... tell it to them all... when you return with us." His breathing was shaky.

Atem looked at them and then sighed. "All of this is happening because of another mistake of mine," he said.

"What do you... mean?" Lord Hepu asked.

"That's Tudhaliyas. The wizard is Tudhaliyas."

Atem's mother gasped, bringing her hand to her mouth while Lord Hepu's eyes widened.

"Who is Tudhaliyas?" I asked, obviously not knowing.

Atem looked at me before closing his eyes for a moment and running his fingers through his hair. "My step-brother."

I looked at Khamenatem, who looked upset.

But then it hit me.

Not Khamenatem.

The only other step-brother Atem had...

The Hittite one?

"How did he escape from prison without our knowledge?" The Queen asked.

"He was never in prison," Atem said. "I never put him there. I lied to you all about that."

"Akhenatem..." The queen said in shock.

"All of you warned me but I went against all of your words. He was a child and I did not want to punish him for his mother's mistakes. I wanted to treat him how I thought father would have wanted me to. So I sent him to a temple in Nubia to be raised as a priest without telling any of you except for Lord Hepu."

"It was your last... good deed for the next decade," Lord Hepu said. "Despite not liking the idea... I supported you because I... I thought it would help to ease your heart... of the pain you were feeling."

Atem let out a breath.

"But why?" I asked, "why would he do all of this if all you were trying to do was help him?" It didn't make sense!

"He did not consider it helping."

I shook my head, "he's insane."

"But I was wrong," Atem continued. "I was wrong and I put all of your lives at risk."

Atem's eyes then fell on Khamenatem and they both exchanged a sad look.

It was clear that Khamenatem was not pleased... and I assumed it was because the wizards' family killed his mother. But at the same time, Khamenatem looked as forgiving as I imagined him to be.

"Pharaoh," Lord Hepu said. "You cannot... *cannot* blame yourself... because you did a *good* thing."

Atem looked at him.

"You did the *right* thing that day... we both know that that would have... been exactly... what your father would have wanted," he said between breaths.

"Though the next couple years were... turbulent... you proved to me that day... that you truly were your father's son... the true heir to the throne... and you should not apologize for that."

Atem's mother nodded, reaching out and touching her sons' cheek. "Anything Tudhaliyas does now is *his* choice. You gave him a chance, my son... and I am so proud of you for that. You have no idea how proud I am. But *he* is the one who took that chance and threw it away and that is *not* your fault."

"It is your duty now... my Pharaoh... to return *maat* to our country and if destroying him is what it takes then... then that is what you must do." Lord Hepu lifted his staff with a shaking hand and held it in front of him. "This staff... it was created to be used by Pharaoh himself... its complete power can only be seen... when a Pharaoh worthy of it uses it... and until the Pharaoh needs it, it is the High Priest of Amun who protects it."

Atem looked down at the staff made of something that looked like silver.

"Your father wielded it once, when you were just a little boy. He used it to defeat a thousand Hittites with one single strike... frightening the Hittites into... into submission... before a war could grow out of hand... and it was the peace treaty at the end of that battle... that sent the traitorous Hittite princess to be his second wife," he said. "And now it is your turn... you must wield its powers and put an end to the pain that Tudhaliyas has caused you... to right all the wrongs."

Atem nodded, and right when he did, the silver staff began to glow.

And before our very eyes, it transformed into a silver bow. A *huge* silver bow.

When Atem took the bow from him in amazement, Lord Hepu smiled. "Your father is proud of you, Akhenatem."

Atem looked at Lord Hepu.

"He is so very proud of you. He has complete faith in you and any decision you will make from here on in."

I held onto the ring that I had gotten as a gift from Atem's mother.

I hoped to maybe see him again... to see him so that I could pass on another message to Atem to make him happy.

But I didn't.

"Wonderful!" We all heard the wizard, who I know knew to be Atem's step-brother, shout.

When we turned around, the wizard struggled, but pulled the sword from his chest and stood up. He stumbled a little but still managing to pick himself up. There was blood coming out of his mouth and he looked weak.

However, the crazy guy still managed to reveal a grin.

"Our father has decided to pit his two sons against each other. We have received his blessing. I can kill you without feeling any guilt now."

Atem let out a short laugh as he stood up, silver bow in his hand. "Like that ever mattered to you."

The wizard held his staff in front of him and Atem loaded his new bow with an arrow.

"You think that worthless thing can—"

Atem released the arrow.

It shot at an incredible speed and shined brightly, leaving a trail of light in its place. When it hit the wizard, he let out a blood-curdling shout as a blinding light beamed from him. It lit the lands for a moment, as if the dark clouds were never covering the sun to begin with.

When the light faded, Atem looked at the bow in amazement before looking back at the wizard.

Everyone had silenced and even the soldiers who were fighting the Sea People off in the distance had froze to see what happened.

The wizard, who had his mouth wide open in shock, fell to his knees, dropping his staff.

Almost immediately after that, Atem turned around. He loaded another arrow and pointed it at the boats belonging to the Sea People.

Three shots.

Three shots was all it took to reduce the boats into nothing. After the bright light had faded, all the boats that could be seen came crashing down before sinking into the Nile. The noise was loud and frightening but we were all awestruck.

Egypt was saved.

Atem had done it.

He saved Egypt.

And I didn't start to vanish because I didn't exist anymore or anything like that.

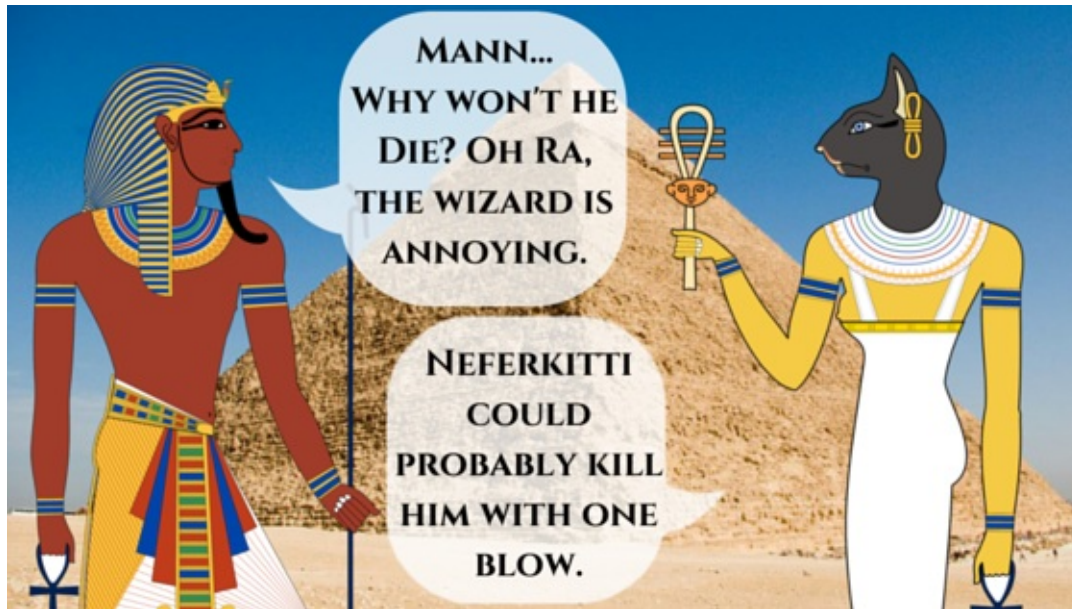
I was still here.

I let out a gasp of relief.

I stood up and ran towards him, "you did it!"

Atem turned to me with a smile, looking both exhausted and relieved. And just as he reached out to touch my face, we heard a cough and then a gargling laugh.

"Not... yet."



Hey all!!

As you guys can probably tell, the story is nearing its end!!! There are still definitely a few chapters left but it's nearing its end nonetheless!

I wanted to know what you all think may happen next! What are your predictions? HAHA!

Thank you so much for reading! If you have enjoyed this story thus far, please don't forget to vote, comment and follow!! <3 If you REALLYYYYYY like this story, I would love to know and would greatly appreciate it if you would vote for all the chapters you liked!!!! Thank you to those who have already done so!!

Love you all and THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING ME AND THIS STORY <3

Luckycharms <33



Chapter 46 - [The End and the Pharaoh]

I glared angrily before loading another arrow into this powerful bow. How could this be? How could he have survived a direct shot that turned hundreds of war ships into nothing?

I shot him again, not sparing a moment to pity him. He may have been my brother but Lord Hepu was right. I had done what I could to help him. Despite that, he himself chose this path. And I would not let him hurt anyone else.

This second shot was exactly like the others. It lit up the sky with stunning lights as if Ra himself had possessed the arrow. And when it shot him, a loud, sharp sound resonated through the lands.

All the soldiers stood in watch, as did my family and my friends... and May.

But even this second shot did nothing but stun him.

He lifted himself back onto his feet and started to walk towards me.

Every shot I took made him step take a step back... but once he recovered he took two steps forward.

Any sanity he had left in him was completely lost. I could see it in the blank, bloodthirsty look in his eyes.

Khamenatem had ran to me, holding more arrows in his hand to replenish my stock... but it had already occurred to me that it was no use.

He was not dying.

It was *not* working.

He laughed hysterically. "It's the ultimate plan!" He shouted into the sky before looking back at me. His body moved stiffly. "It took me a full year to prepare but it is the ultimate plan! I thought that your discovery of love meant my original plan had failed... but no. You just made this all the more easy for me!"

"What are you talking about?" I asked as I defensively pushed May behind me. I felt her warm hands on my back, holding me in what I imagined was worry, as she peeked around me to see the wizard.

"Do you want to know how to kill me?" The wizard asked before laughing loudly. "To get rid of *me*?"

"Atem," May now gripped onto my arm, probably sensing my sudden panic. "This doesn't sound so good."

I turned to my brother quickly. "Take her back," I ordered Khamenatem, worried about what Tudhaliyas was going to say. "Get her away. Protect her. Do you understand?"

Khamenatem nodded without a hesitation.

"What— *Atem*!" May called, but Khamenatem already had a tight hold of her and was pulling her back.

The wizard laughed some more. "Oh, I'm not going to do anything to her!" He laughed. "That would be suicide! And I refuse to go down as a suicide!"

I narrowed my eyes, loading another arrow into my bow.

"The only way to kill me..." he laughed, "is to kill her!"

I lowered the bow, "you cannot continue to try and fool me with the same trick—"

"Did you think that her being here was *okay*?" He asked. "Did you think that you could just create a life with her here... without any consequences?"

He laughed and laughed so loudly that it echoed.

I turned and looked at May and saw her eyes wide with shock.

"If you want me gone, you must kill her!" With that, he ran towards me. I shot an arrow at him again, making him pause for a moment to recuperate.

And then I threw the bow over my shoulder and pulled my sword out from my sheath before running towards him. I swung my sword at him but he defended himself with his staff. He laughed hysterically once more.

He had gone mad.

"Look at you," I said. "You were meant to be the noble son of our father. Look at what you have done to yourself."

His grin vanished, replaced with a glare. "Noble son of *our* father?" He hissed, "I pray your filthy father's spirit never reached the other world. I pray he fell into a world of nothingness. I pray for his misery—"

I pushed him back in anger, "how *dare* you!" I hissed. "Our father raised you as an equal to us all!"

"I care not about a dead King of Egypt!" He growled. "If I had the chance to slit his throat than I would take it in a heartbeat!"

I opened my mouth to curse him for his words, but found myself being interrupted.

"*I see,*" we suddenly heard a deep, loud and booming voice say. "*Though your unjustified hate saddens me.*"

Both of us froze.

I felt a warm light coming from behind me, and after a moment of hesitation, I turned around and saw May staring at me in shock, the ring around her finger growing brightly.

Her eyes then fell upon a figure that was right in front of both her and Khamenatem, shining golden in colour. I could not make out the features, but as I squinted I heard May shout, "Atem! *Look out!*"

I heard Tudhaliyas shout and I turned around quickly, sword in hand, only to see the brightly shining figure suddenly standing between Tudhaliyas and I. He was

holding his arm out, and whatever he was doing had stopped Tudhaliyas in his tracks, similar to how Lord Hepu had stopped him.

He pushed Tudhaliyas back a couple meters, trapping him with an invisible power as he growled in anger and protest.

And when he finally turned around, I heard my mother let out a cry.

Everyone immediately fell to the floor, bowing in respect for the man that stood before me.

It was my father.

And when I had finally snapped out of my shock, I too fell onto my knees.

I did not understand what was happening.

His spirit?

Was it his spirit here to advise me? Like how May's aunt appeared in her dreams?

"Rise, my son. Everyone." Though his voice was loud and deep enough to be heard by everyone, he still said it softly. A soft expression on his face.

He had always been a powerful speaker. He chose his words wisely and his voice was strong. This voice was exactly why everyone always listened to him

"Father..." I started, as I rose to my feet.

And before I could say anything else, my father pulled me into a hug.

He hugged me tightly, patting my back the same way he had when I was a child.

And when he pulled away, he smiled. *"I must begin by saying how proud I am of you, my son. So very proud of you. Though your choices may not have always been the best, you have worked hard to clean up a mess I created."*

"You did not create—"

"Let me speak, my son."

I froze, but nodded.

"My untimely death and incapacity to leave this world without any turmoil is why you struggled at such a young age. And for that, I owe you an apology."

I wanted to say no.

I wanted to say that it was not his fault. I wouldn't let my noble father put the blame on himself.

But I knew he wouldn't want me to argue with him.

So I just stood there, listening to him.

He turned to Tudhaliyas, shaking his head slightly. *"I hoped for better from you, Tudhaliyas. I hoped you would be the one to finally bring the conflicts between our people and the Hittites to an end. Yet you made everything worse. You made it all worse and tried to destroy the lives of my true hearted sons—"*

Tudhaliyas spit in the direction of our father, "spare me!" he growled.

My father was not offended, though all the soldiers started and growled at his disrespect. My father did not bat an eye. Instead, he turned to Khamenatem. *"You, on the other hand, have been noble to your older brother... the way a younger brother should be. Your actions have left your loving mother's spirit at ease. She is happy, and I am proud, Khamenatem."*

Khamenatem smiled proudly, almost in tears, before bowing low once more.

Then he looked at my mother, who had her hands over her mouth, crying tears of joy. *"My dearest,"* my father said with a warm smile, *"I had left you behind to struggle on your own to raise two boys who both have an important role in these lands... and I know well that your love was never ending despite your hardship. For that, I thank you."*

My mother held her hands over her heart and smiled, still in tears.

I could only imagine how she felt.

She loved my father more than anyone in this world.

And after smiling warmly at her, my father turned back to me. *"My son, this turmoil has been drawn out too long... it has extended longer than need be. Which is why I was finally permitted by the gods to come here to you,"* he said. *"Akhenatem, you have won this war."*

I let out a relieved breath.

It was relieving to hear those words after finding out that Tudhaliyas refused to simply die.

"You have won this war and defeated the People of the Sea who had the goal of destroying our lands. And you will soon return the world and the universe to the way was meant to be," he said. *"Due to this, the future has already started to change back to the way it is meant to be, my son."*

I blinked, wondering what that meant.

Back to the way it was *meant* to be?

"However, there are also some other changes that are beginning which are not supposed to happen. And these changes are not because of your victory in this battle. It is because of the woman you love," he said, making my eyes widen.

"Tudhaliyas lied earlier, saying her death had caused the unraveling of maat. In fact, it is the opposite. He was telling the truth when he said that the presence of the girl you love is why you cannot kill him."

I raised an eyebrow. "What?"

"Fate cannot be changed. No matter what happens here in Egypt, whether you lose this war or win it, May will be born when she is destined to be born and she will die when she is destined to die... as with every other being who exists, who has existed and who will come to exist."

"So? What is the problem then?"

"The problem is that her presence in this time is disrupting maat... disrupting the stability. Tudhaliyas brought her here with the sole purpose of doing just that. It is this disruption that creates the energy he needs to be the monster that he is. He feeds off of the chaos and you cannot stop him while she is here."

I was starting to understand now.

"And if she stays here any longer, my son... not only will your step-brother continue to cause havoc in our lands, but the future will begin to change again, getting rid of all you have done to return it to the way it was supposed to be," he paused and shook his head. "No, it has already started. If this goes on for much longer then May will never be able to go home, and even if she could, she would find herself in a place she could never recognize. No one in her family will be identifiable. Her friends will not be the people she knows now. Even the lands will be unrecognizable. She will no longer have a place there since the future as she knows it will be dramatically different."

I let out a breath.

"Which is why I come bearing what is necessary to do what is right," he said. "But my son, I love you. And for all your troubles, I only want what will make you happy, which is why I will give you a choice. A choice that the gods have agreed to allow you to make because you deserve it. Will you hear it?"

I hesitated, but I nodded. "Yes, father."

"Then hear me clearly, my son, and choose what your heart truly desires. You cannot go back from your decision, do you understand?"

"Yes."

"In both options, May must go home. She cannot stay here for much longer... the future will be destroyed if she does. Thus, the first option is that you go with her. The second option is that you stay."

That seemed too easy of a choice, but at the same time... it was the most difficult choice I had ever been given. "I—"

"However," he said, cutting me off. "If you chose to go with her then Egypt will be destroyed by a second wave of the Sea People's army... to create the future that was what you and May once knew. Egypt will be destroyed in the way it was not destined to be destroyed."

I felt like I had been punched in the gut.

"On the other hand, if you stay and allow her to leave on her own, then her absence from our time will allow for maat to return and Tudhaliyas will lose this strength he possesses. You can take the chance to try and win this battle with your brother."

It was strange that though the options had become so much more complicated, the decision had become so much simpler. In fact... it even felt like I had no choice at all.

"Which will you choose, my son... and do not fret, no matter the choice I will still love, and be proud of you for all that you have done."

I felt the eyes of everyone on me, waiting for my answer... and I felt the disappointment.

They knew what I wanted.

Everyone knew what I wanted.

Everyone.

Everyone knew I wanted to choose May. To be with her. To be happy. They knew that I had never been happier with anyone.

And when I turned around to face my men, my family, everyone... I saw the look of unhappiness on their faces. They tried to hide it, trying to show that they would love me no matter what decision I made. I was their Pharaoh after all, and I had gotten this far trying to protect them.

But when I saw her running, pushing past the soldiers to reach me, and felt her jump into my arms, I knew almost instantly that she was the *only* one in this world who *really* knew me.

Though she knew me for a shorter time, she was the only one who could understand me.

She knew my choice before even I was completely certain.

"No," she cried. "No!"

I hugged her back, knowing that everyone else was staring in surprise.

"*Please!* No, Atem! I don't want to leave you!" I felt her tears on my skin as I hugged her tightly.

Though she begged me not to send her away, I just knew that she understood. The fact that she knew my decision was enough for me to realize this. She wasn't a bad person... she was everything but a bad person. She was too good to be true. And I knew she wouldn't truly want me to sacrifice everything for her.

We both knew I *had* to do this.

"I'm sorry. I am so, so sorry, May." My heart had never felt anything like this before.

"Do I understand your choice, my dear son?"

I took a deep breath. It took a great effort to ignore her sobs long enough to hear my father's voice.

"Yes," I said, my lips near her neck. "We need to take the chance. I need to save my people."

May began to sob even more.

She cried so loudly that everyone had silenced. To me, it felt like the entire world had silenced... and it broke my heart.

And after a moment, I started to feel it.

I started to feel her being pulled away from me.

So I held onto her tightly.

I wasn't finished yet. I hadn't said what I wanted to say. She couldn't leave yet. She held on tightly to me too, probably feeling the pull as well.

"Listen to me, May," I said, lifting her chin up so she would look at me and touching her wet cheek with my hand. "I need you to know this... I need you to know that everyone here thinks that I am the one who saved Egypt. I am the one

who rescued the lives of all the men and women and children here... but I am not," I pressed my forehead against hers and closed my eyes. "All of this is your doing. *You*."

She let out a shaky breath, "Atem..."

"You are *my* hero. You changed me. You saved me and in turn you saved everyone here. I want you to know that."

When I opened my eyes I saw her staring at me, her lips pressed together as she tried to stop her crying.

"Everything we have done together... I will never forget a single moment of it. You have done so much for me and nothing I could ever do could thank you enough for that,"

"You don't need to... thank me," she cried.

I let out a breath. "I don't deserve to ask you for anything more... but let me ask you for one last thing, please."

She looked at me, tightening her hold on me even more, but the pull was getting stronger.

"I ask that you move on... be happy, May. Promise me that."

She shook her head, her crying growing heavy again.

"Please, May... I *beg* you."

"But I love *you*."

"I know you do, and I love you. I love you so much. And that is exactly why I want you to do this, May. Be happy. Promise me this."

The pull was now too strong. It felt like she was being ripped from my arms, pulling away from me slowly towards the sky. "Promise me, May!" I started to raise my voice, grasping onto her hands.

I held out my little finger, in the hopes of doing that stupid thing she liked to do,

and after a hesitation, she linked her little finger with mine and sealed the promise with the touch of our thumbs.

When I couldn't hold on any longer, and her fingers slipped away from mine, she sobbed. "I'll try, Atem."

As the gods pulled her away, her skin began to glow the same kind of gold that my father had.

She looked like a goddess, brightening up the sky and causing the dark clouds to being to vanish... and for some reason that made me smile.

And I think everyone else thought that too, because one by one all of the soldiers got on their knees to bow.

To show their thanks to the woman who saved my life... their lives.

Even Khamenatem, my crying mother and Lord Hepu got onto their knees.

And May stared back, wide-eyed and unable to comprehend... like her usual, foolish self.

I let out a short laugh, despite the situation, and then saw my father standing by my side now.

"May... I wish I had the opportunity to get to know you better. You were the only one who was able to understand my son... the only one who he could learn to love. All of Egypt is indebted to you and I promise you will live a long, happy and prosperous life."

And then to my surprise, even he got down onto his knee, bowing in respect for her.

I looked up and saw the look of shock on her as she began to fade away.

I bowed too, lowering my head in respect for the woman I loved, and when I looked back at her, I saw her force a smile through her tears, still fading.

"Do not forget your promise!" I yelled into the sky.

Her lip quivered and she nodded her head quickly.

And then she was gone.

Everyone rose from their bows and stared at me.

Silence.

All I could hear was the flowing of the Nile as the breathing of the people around me.

I felt an arm on my shoulder. *"She will be returned to where she last saw you... there will be minor changes in her life but nothing too severe,"* my father said. *"I am certain she will keep your promise to you, my son. Do not fear."*

My hands balled up into fists... shaking.

I was shaking.

I did not realize I was crying until I heard the whispered voices of shock.

I fell onto my knees, unable to hold it back.

The tears wouldn't stop.

"My dear son," I heard my mother cry as she ran towards me. She got onto her knees too, holding me in her arms. Her warmth was comforting... reminding me of my childhood.

The last time I cried... was so long ago.

I had maintained my stoic, emotionless and heartless image for so long... And here I was now, crying like a child in his mother's arms.

"Akhenatem, my son," my father said, kneeling down beside me. *"You have proven yourself to the gods to be true of heart. You have done what is right and for that you will find your own happiness again, just as May will. But right now, you must end this conflict... maat will only completely be restored once Tudhaliyas is dealt with."*

It took me a moment, but after wiping my tears away, I pulled away from my

mother, and then stood back up, helping my mother up before looking at the silenced Tudhaliyas.

He was grinning, grinning in silence.

Watching me in utter amusement.

"I have done what I came here to do, Akhenatem... so finish what you started and end this conflict. Bring peace to Egypt, and I will continue to watch you and everyone else from the afterlife."

I looked over at my father and nodded.

He nodded back at me, and after giving me a proud smile... the smile I lived for to see as a child... he too vanished.

The sky had brightened completely.

Ra was shining down effortlessly onto us, touching our skin and warming us.

And when I looked back at Tudhaliyas, his grin grew. "I win," he let out a laugh that echoed across the silent lands. "I win."

I picked up the massive silver bow before looking at him, "you're delusional."

"No," he said, grinning ear to ear. "You are miserable... that is what I wanted. Your lover is gone! Forever! You are miserable! On your knees, oh Pharaoh almighty! I win!"

I loaded an arrow into the bow and pointed it at him. "Do *not* get your hopes up," I said, angrily.

"Oh?" he questioned, "kill me... go ahead! I'll die happily!"

I shook my head. "You have *not* won," I said sternly.

"Enlighten me then, Pharaoh! Why *not*?"

My glare grew harsher as I aimed the arrow carefully. "Because I know she will be fine," I said, and almost instantly, his cocky grin began to fade. "Because I know that she is alive... she will keep her promise to me. She will move on. She

will have her own children. She will grow old with people who loves her and she will die peacefully."

Tudhaliyas began to glare.

"And *that* is enough for me. If I keep telling myself that then I will be happy. *That* is what love is, Tudhaliyas. And though I am certain that you have no idea what that really means... it is strange that you are the one who made me realize that."

"No," he shouted.

"Good riddance to you, brother. Your games end *here* and *now*."

"No!" He shrieked. "I curse you! I curse you! I curse you! You will *never* be happy! Never!"

"I am sorry to disappoint you... but I thank you for helping me realize what happiness and love really are."

His eyes widened.

Then I released the arrow.

It pierced right through him without any difficulty.

And as he choked his last breath of air, all of this was *finally* over.

----- † -----



Hi everyone!!

I hope my little picture made you all giggle xD! Thank you as always for reading, voting and commenting! It means so much to me!!! I hope you enjoyed the chapter, despite the fact that it was kind of depressing!!

I will have the next chapter up a couple days earlier than usual so you don't have to wait so long!!!

Don't forget to vote and let me know what you think! <3

Love, Luckycharms! <3

My Social Media!



thannujah-94



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thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 47 - [Beauty and Moving Forward]

When my eyes opened I gasped heavily for breath. I blinked a couple times, confused and heavy hearted. For a moment, I forgot where I was and what I was doing.

So I stood there. Frozen.

All I could smell was gasoline... gasoline and rubber and metal and cement. The light was fake and dim and painfully depressing.

I looked around.

I was in our parking garage. In one hand I was holding a coffee mug, in the other I had my car keys and a massive purse hanging from my arm.

And as I took slow breaths, it started to come back to me.

It all started to come back.

"Atem..." I whispered.

Almost immediately, I dropped the coffee mug onto the floor of the parking garage, turned around and ran back to the elevator.

I slammed on the elevator button a couple times and then pressed the close button a couple times too.

The ride up was excruciatingly slow.

And when the elevator ringed to a stop on my floor, I ran out of the elevator and used the keys to open my door.

When I was in my apartment, I let out a breath.

It looked different.

So different.

But that didn't matter now.

I dropped my purse and keys onto the floor and rushed into the apartment.
"Atem?" I called, loudly. "Atem!"

I ran into his room and took a shaky breath. Aside from a single bed... it was empty.

No covers.

No books.

No bicycle.

Nothing.

But I refused to give up.

I ran through my apartment, calling Atem and Neferkitti too.

Even Neferkitti was nowhere in sight. There was no food bowl or water bowl, no cat food... absolutely nothing!

When I finally went into my room I saw that that too had no sign of Atem. Nonetheless, I still looked around, flipping over pillows, emptying purses, and all sorts of other things. I didn't know what I was looking for exactly... just *something* to tell me Atem was here.

When I deemed my bedroom empty and was just about to leave, I froze in my tracks and did a double take at my full body mirror.

I turned to face it and put a hand over my mouth.

I almost didn't even realize that the girl standing in front of the mirror was me.

My hair was short... just to my shoulders. All of it had been cut off.

I was wearing high-heeled boots, which probably explained why it was so hard for me to run and my makeup looked... different. Not like how I would usually do it.

I was thinner... much thinner.

The kind of thin that I, at times, dreamed of being.

And to make it all even stranger, I was wearing high-waisted blue jeans and a white *crop-top*. A *crop-top*. I never wore crop-tops! But at the very least, to cover myself I had a leather jacket on.

And though for a moment, I wondered who that girl staring back at me was, I shook my head and ran.

I had to find Atem.

After getting down to the bottom floor I burst out of the elevator in a run. It was the middle of the day so the streets were pretty crowded. Nonetheless, I ran like mad out of the apartment. As people turned to stare at both me and my loud heels that clacked hard against the pavement, I realized something else that was different.

I could run.

I could run very fast and very far and I wasn't tired. Maybe it was because I was freaking out. Yeah. It was probably that. I was freaking out since I needed to find Atem. It must have been the adrenaline.

In a matter of minutes, I skidded to a stop in front of Grandma Seetha's cake shop. I pulled open the door and ran into the shop, gasping for breath.

Unsurprisingly, Grandma Seetha was there at the counter, placing some cupcakes onto a few stands. When she looked up, her eyes widened.

"May, darling!" She smiled as she said my name, looking happier than usual. "It's been a while."

"Have you seen Atem?" I asked, cutting straight to the chase.

Her smile faded slightly as her eyebrows rose. "Atem?"

"Yes, Atem."

"I..." she hesitated. "I don't think I know an Atem."

My heart sank. "No, Grandma Seetha," I said. "He worked here. You guys made honey balls and stuff together... please, try to remember!"

Grandma Seetha shook her head. "No... darling. No boy has ever worked here," she said. "May, are you alright?"

I started to shake my head, thinking of how impossible this was. So I stepped back and turned around and left the shop as fast as I could while my Grandma called after me with a worried voice.

I pulled out my phone next. It was a different phone from what I remembered having but I knew the passcode. So I called Blake while walking away from Grandma Seetha's shop.

"May," he said as soon as he picked up.

"Blake, have you seen Atem?"

There was a hesitation. "Who?"

"Atem!" I said, raising my voice. "Akhenatem! You went to the gym with him every Monday, Wednesday and Friday!"

"No... May are you alright?"

I swallowed back my nervousness before rubbing my face with my free hand. "Yeah, I'm fine. Sorry, bye."

And then I called Ro.

"Ro, have you seen Atem?"

"Who the hell is that?" was her response.

"Okay, bye."

Alec was next but he didn't pick up. Next was Uncle Ethan. And then next my brother. I even tried my mother.

None of them could answer me! None of them knew who Atem even was. How was this possible? How could everyone just *forget*!

After standing in the middle of the sidewalk and trying to process what was going on, I started to run again. I ran down the street and into the park and when I got to my usual spot I sat down, trying to clear my head. Trying not to cry.

Was I going crazy?

I swallowed back my tears and just sat there... staring at the view. I needed to calm down. I couldn't think straight with this racing heart and pounding headache. I needed to relax.

And that was exactly what I ended up doing.

Hours passed. The sun was even starting to set. And for all those hours all I did was stare in to space.

But when my headache had subdued and my heart settled down, I searched through my phone for photos... texts... something to prove that Akhenatem was here. Or at the very least, Neferkitti!

But there was *nothing*.

Absolutely nothing.

All I could wonder now was whether or not everything that had happened to me was a dream. Was Akhenatem a dream? Was the year or so we spent together a dream? Was everything that happened in Egypt a dream? Was I mixing up fiction and reality?

No... how could it be? There were so many memories squeezed into my brain, how could all of those be memories?

Then I realized something.

I looked down at my phone and stared at it for a second before switching the screen on. I opened the Internet browser and after noticing that my nails were uncomfortably long and painted with a bright pink colour, I typed Akhenatem's name into Google.

I hesitated before I pressed search, but when I finally did it, I tapped the first page I could find.

There were no pictures. Well, there were pictures but no photographs of him. Of the man I knew. Instead, there were images of statues and pictures of classic Egyptian paintings.

I took a deep breath and then held it as I read the summary paragraph. For some reason I was scared... very, very scared.

"After the death of his father, Akhenatem took the throne at the age of ten with Queen Satiah as his co-regent. His early years as Pharaoh were believed to have been filled with turmoil, which he suppressed through the execution of all those who were traitors to the throne. Scholars believe this early turmoil to be the reason for his long and harsh rule. However, his strict rule reinforced his position as Pharaoh and Akhenatem continued his reign with little to no problems. Akhenatem is well known today for the massive wall reliefs found in his brother Khamenatem tomb, recounting the story of their traitorous Hittite half-brother who tried to establish a coup d'état. Due to his tomb still being undiscovered, scholars are still unsure what became of this Pharaoh, but believe he died shortly after the attempted coup d'état—"

I stopped reading, realizing the breath that I was holding.

No.

This was *impossible*.

He died?

I felt the tears forming in my eyes as I flipped my phone around and bit my lip.

This wasn't fair. Was I really going crazy? How would I ever know if any of this was even the truth?

I placed my hands on my head, unable to understand what was going on. It felt like I had two sets of memories. One set was with Atem... the year I spent with him, the wizard sending me to Egypt, all of those memories. And the other set were these unfamiliar memories of me in a world without him. Memories of me living alone, working out to impress some guy, and hating school.

It was like I was in the head of someone I didn't even know.

And when I realized that, the tears escaped.

They ran down my cheek as I tried to wipe them away. My makeup wiped off and I probably looked like an idiot but I didn't care. I was so confused. I was so scared. Who was I? What was going on—

"Hey, princess."

My eyes widened at the voice.

I was frozen for a moment as someone stepped in front of me.

It wasn't exactly the voice I wanted to hear, but it wasn't a voice I was not expecting at all.

"My mum called me and told me you were acting strange... I thought I would find you here. Are you alright?"

I looked up and my breathing hastened when I saw her standing there. It was *her*.

"Aunty... Maya?" My eyes widened.

"The one and only," she grinned. "What's going on with you, kiddo—"

I stood up and rushed into her arms, hugging her so tightly that she gasped for air. "You're alive!"

"I... yeah, I am," she said. "What..."

Aunty Maya was okay... she was alive. And it was as I hugged her tightly that I felt something cool around my finger touch my cheek. I looked at my hand and

then froze.

The ring.

Atem's father's ring.

I still... had it?

Now I was sobbing.

I cried because despite the fact that I hoped that all of what I was thinking was all a dream... I knew it wasn't.

It was real.

I had fallen in love with the man of my dreams and now he was gone. Dead. He had died thousands of years ago.

I would never see him again.

I would never hear his voice again.

I would never touch him again.

He was a memory now.

So I cried and cried and cried while the confused Aunty Maya rubbed my back. She didn't ask any questions, and I needed that. I didn't know what I was going to do but right now all I wanted to do was cry.

Maybe... hoping that crying would somehow make it all better.

~ † ~

I pretty much went into isolation for a couple days after that. Aunty Maya had walked me home without asking any questions and dropped me off. Then she would text me to check on me but didn't invade my personal space.

And I needed my personal space.

I wanted so badly to hang out with her... but things were way too confusing right now. I needed to figure everything out. So all I did for the next couple of days was stay in my room, open up a brand new notebook and write down as much as I could remember about Atem.

I needed to know for sure that this all wasn't a crazy dream.

The ring that was still on my finger was pretty reassuring... but I still needed more reassurance.

So I was locked in my room for a good five days, only coming out to use the toilet or eat junk food. I recorded as much as I could, I even tried to remember it all from the month it started. I knew it all started last year, May. He appeared out of nowhere with a sword and I helped him because of my dream with Aunty Maya. Then the wizard tried to kill me. Then we got Neferkitti and I went to prom and I started to teach him how to read and write. Then he started working with Grandma Seetha at the cake shop, though she couldn't remember it.

After that I started university, and Halloween came. He still wasn't so nice to me at that point but by the Halloween night I realized he wasn't so bad. I remembered that... though I was kinda drunk that night.

Then it snowed for the first time and he got me a bicycle for Christmas and he started to open up to me. At some point around this time he told me about his family. Or was it that I found out on my own first? I couldn't remember but it was okay to mix up the order... as long as I could remember it.

That was all I wanted to do.

After all of this I started to like him... and eventually I told him and he laughed at me. And Blake consoled me and made me go take on Atem head on. And so I did and it worked.

Eventually I made him my boyfriend and things were going great.

And oh yeah, how could I forget about Julian?

Jerk.

And then he found out about his brother and then that old lady and then it was downhill from there.

I wrote it all down. All of it in as much detail as I could remember.

I wrote the names of his court members, his mother, his brother, his father, and the maids who helped me... everyone. I wrote down how I remembered them looking, what they did. I wrote all about Neferkitti too. I wrote how loving she was, what colours she had on her, how she felt and all the things I remember her doing. I wrote down as much detail as possible.

It took five full days and then I was done.

I filled a full notebook covered with flowers on it with all my thoughts. The entire book was pretty much filled except for the last couple pages.

And when I was done, I closed it and hugged it and leaned against the headboard as I tried to process it all.

How could all of this be fake? All of these memories were so vivid, so real. That was why I wrote it all down... that... and because I never wanted to forget any of them. *Never.*

I looked down at the notebook before sighing. Was this all I had left of him? These memories?

The last thing I remembered Atem saying to me was making me promise that I would be happy. If they all wanted me to be happy then wouldn't it have been easier if I had just left these memories behind? Would I have wanted that?

But then I started to think about it.

This life... the person who I was in this life. Was she happy?

She was working out like a crazy person to stay skinny for this guy named Duke who she was on-again-off-again with. She liked our hair long but he thought shorthaired girls were hotter, so she cut it short. She didn't even know if he cared for her but she still tried to impress him.

She didn't talk to anyone in her family anymore, not even our brother, because

she was so sick of them telling her what to do. She never went to see Grandma Seetha and didn't even decorate cakes at all. Her relationship with Uncle Ethan was strange because he tried to give her advice once and she wasn't going to take it.

It was a similar situation with Blake.

And my best friend. My best friend Ro. She was still my best friend and this other girl loved her to death, but this girl had done something horrible to her. There was a reason why Alec didn't pick up my call when I wanted to ask him about Atem, and that was because when things got difficult between him and Ro, I told Ro to break up with him.

Because... I, or she, was jealous?

I hugged my legs, the book still against my chest. My eyes had started to water and I started to realize that this girl was everything I never wanted myself to be.

Was this how my life would have turned out if I hadn't met Atem in that other life?

Had Atem... had he somehow saved me too?

Maybe that's why my memories of it all stayed. They stayed because whoever was controlling all of this knew that I would not want things to continue on like this.

I had to fix things.

So I sighed loudly, put the notebook on my bed and then left my room. I felt like a vampire when I left my room... feeling real sunlight from the balcony touch my skin after a couple days kind of stung. But I needed all of that.

My heart felt a little more at ease now, though I was scared... still scared.

I made myself some more junk to eat, macaroni and cheese this time. As I waited for the macaroni to cook, I thought now of Neferkitti. Where was *she*? How come everyone else was still here except for her?

The house was silent without her.

Silent and lonely.

When she was here, I would almost always hear some sort of shuffling or meowing or *something*. But now it was just the water coming to a boil and my breathing.

How would I even find her? Alec was the one who got her, though maybe that was exactly the reason why she wasn't here. Alec didn't like me after I destroyed his relationship with Ro. Maybe it was that move that made me lose Neferkitti.

I sighed loudly and then there was a knock on my door. "It's me!" I heard Aunt Maya say from behind it.

I was a little bit surprised to hear her... I guess you could say that I still couldn't even believe she was here. But it made sense. If the wizard hadn't ever come to the future than he wouldn't have killed her. So she was alive and perfectly fine. And strangely enough, Aunt Maya *still* did her PhD on Akhenatem. It was like nothing could pull her away from her interest in him.

When I opened the door, she grinned at me with her usual, gorgeous smile. Her eyes were the same bright brown that I always remembered them to be and her long black hair tumbled over her shoulders. "Okay, I know you probably wanted me to not drop by but I was worried, you can't blame me."

I smiled. "It's fine, Aunt Maya."

She looked at me, a little surprised, as she took off her shoes. "How are you?"

"Better."

"What had gotten into you, princess?" She asked. "Anything you want to talk about?"

I bit my lip.

I *did* want to talk about it. I really did. I wanted to talk to her and tell her everything but how could I without sounding crazy? So I just stared at her.

After a moment, she took my hand in hers and walked me to the sofa, forcing me to sit next to her. "May, sweetheart... you can tell me *anything*."

I kept my eyes on her for a long moment, and then I sighed. "Something... changed."

"Yeah?"

"I..." I looked down for a second and then back at her. "This person I am right now... I don't want any of it."

Her eyebrow rose.

"Maybe... maybe I bonked my head or something," I chuckled awkwardly. "Or maybe I had some sort of epiphany. But I want to fix everything... I don't like who I am."

Aunty Maya kept a tight hold of my hand. "May, you should never not like who you are."

"But I know I can be better," I sighed and rubbed my head. "There's someone I met... and when I was with him things were different. Things were near to perfect. And I can't explain it but I know that's how I feel things should be."

My aunt watched me carefully, trying to *really* understand what I was saying.

"It was almost like... an entirely different life when I was with him," I let out a breath. "And I can't be with him anymore but I want... I want things to go back to the way they're meant to be."

She didn't understand, but at the same time she did. I could tell by the look on her face. "May," she started. "If that's what you want than go for it. You should always do what will make you happy in the end and though I have no idea what you're talking about—" she chuckled, and so did I, "—if you feel that what you're going to do is going to put you in a place of happiness than do it."

I nodded.

Yes. I was going to do it.

"And sweetheart... I feel like something big has happened but you aren't ready to tell me yet... just remember, May, I'm always here for you."

I smiled at her and then reached out to hug her. "I know," I always knew that.

Right then, I heard the hissing of boiling water as it spilled out of the pot with the macaroni in it.

"Oh no!" I got up and ran to the pot as Aunt May laughed.

She followed me over and looked surprised, "Macaroni, huh? Tired of dieting?"

I rolled my eyes. "May and diet do not go together."

Aunt May laughed some more.

She stayed for a short while, enjoying a bowl of Macaroni and Cheese with me. She told me about how work was going and how she had been asked to teach a course at my university once school started on the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. She was super excited, especially since that part of their history covered Akhenaten.

And as she talked, I remembered how much I missed her. Being with her made me feel so much better.

After we finished eating, Aunt May had to leave. So I walked her to the door and gave her a tight hug. "I'll come check on you again soon, okay?"

I nodded. But as she stepped out of the door, I hesitated. "Hold on."

She looked at me.

"Do you... is there any chance you have any... good quality photo's of... Akhenaten?"

"Akhenaten?" My aunt asked. I saw her face brighten up instantly. She loved talking about that particular Pharaoh. "You mean like, photos of him in reliefs or statues?"

"Yeah."

Aunt May nodded. "Yeah, I've got a ton, why?"

"Can you send me one?" I asked. "A really good clear one?"

"Sure, but why?"

"Just cause."

Aunty Maya chuckled, "well, alright. I'll send them as soon as I get home."

I thanked her once more and with that she was off.

And after that, I had work to do.

First thing first, I called Ro.

~ † ~

I ran to Ro's apartment making use of this athleticism, which was otherwise foreign to me. When she opened the door, she looked mad. "Where on earth were you for the past five days... and what are you wearing?"

I looked down at my clothes. It was just your average pair of jeans and a t-shirt. Nothing special. But I rolled my eyes and walked into her home. "I have work to do," I said to her. I had been repeating that to myself all day since Aunty Maya left.

"What?"

I hugged her.

I hugged her so tightly that she coughed, "May... what—"

"I'm so sorry," I said to her.

"Sorry for what?"

I pulled away and looked at her. She looked exactly the same except a little angrier looking. And that may have been my fault. "You have to get back with Alec," I said.

Aurora scoffed, "May what are you—"

"You two are perfect for each other... you *have* to get back together."

"Where is this coming from? We've been broken up for months!"

"Just trust me—"

"You were the one who said he didn't deserve me—"

"Exactly! I was being a horrible, horrible person. I was jealous and wanted you to myself. I take it back now, I wasn't being fair. Please, Ro... believe me, you two were made for each other."

"May..."

"I called him a hundred times before I came here—" I cut myself off, realizing that was a lie. "—well, ninety-four, but still. I called him ninety-four times and you know he hates me because of what happened but when he finally picked up I explained it all to him too."

"May, what is *wrong* with you?"

"Trust me," I held her hands in mine, "just *trust* me. You two were *meant* for each other. In fact, I know you still love him."

She stared at me in shock, looking at me like I had gone crazy. But then there was a knock on the door. I knew exactly who it was so I let go of her hands and ran to open it.

Ro scoffed, "Alec?"

Alec stood there, only glancing at me for a second. He had a huge bouquet of roses. "Hey..."

"Ro... if you're willing to break up with the man of your dreams just because of something stupid I said... then *please* give him another chance since I'm asking you."

She looked so confused... and maybe I was making all of this happen way too

fast. But I couldn't let them stay apart much longer.

"I love you so much, Ro. You are my bestest friend in the whole wide world and I want you to be happy. And I know Alec will make you happy."

She stared at me for a moment before looking at Alec. Then she sighed. "Let me get changed," she said before she walked off.

I let out a relieved chuckle and after she vanished into her room, I turned to the shocked Alec.

"What has gotten into you?" Alec asked. He looked happy, but at the same time he looked like he still didn't trust me.

It kind of hurt a little. But I couldn't blame him

"I'm so sorry, Alec. I really am... this isn't going to make any sense right now but I really do think of you as one of my best friends," I said, making his eyebrows rise. "I know you're the kind of person who would do so much for me and for that, I'm thanking you now. But right now, all that matters is that you and Ro get back together. You two are meant to be."

He stared at me for a moment before letting out a short laugh. He then reached out and gave me a one armed hug. "Thank you."

I laughed, almost in tears. "Thank me after you two get back together."

When he pulled away, he just watched me for a moment before Ro marched out of her bedroom. "You have a ton of explaining to do when I get back," Ro said. "I don't know what has gotten into you but you are going to tell me everything, do you understand?"

I nodded.

"C'mon, let's go, idiot," she said to Alec, who chuckled. She then looked at me once more. "Lock the door on your way out, May."

I nodded.

I was certain that everything was going to be fine with them. Auntie Maya had

said to me back in Egypt that love was a powerful thing and it could never be a lie. And I knew that Ro and Alec really loved each other. They would be fine. So that was one thing off my checklist of things to fix.

Next on my list was calling Uncle Ethan. I sat on Ro's couch and called Uncle Ethan with my phone. As always, he picked up in an instant.

"Hello, princess."

I smiled, it had been a while since I had talked to him. "Hey Uncle Ethan, can I talk for a bit and you listen?"

He hesitated, "sure. Go right ahead. Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," I said. "But I just wanted to apologize for being such a rotten brat."

"May—"

"I talk, you listen."

He chuckled.

"I love the advice you give me, Uncle Ethan. I need it. I don't know what had gotten into me back then but I want you to know I'll never do it again. Please don't ever hold back from telling me how you feel about the things I do. I know you really care about me and only mean well."

In this other life of mine... he had given me a lot of good advice. He had been by my side through difficult times like when Aunt Maya died and he had done so much to keep me happy. I watched him suffer on his own, though he tried to hide it from me to keep me from worrying about him... and though in this life he was fine and happy, I knew his love and care for me hadn't changed at all.

"May... I'm glad you feel that way," he said. "But do you want to come and talk about anything? Is something wrong?"

I shook my head. "No, I'm fine Uncle Ethan. I'll come and see you really soon but there are a couple other things I have to do."

"Alright, I understand," he said. "May, I love you, princess. Don't forget that."

I chuckled. "Trust me, I won't."

And after saying goodbye to him, that was another thing I checked off my list.

Next was Blake.

I bought two coffees from Blake's favourite coffee shop and rushed off to the police station.

I had a car... a car that I forced my brother to buy me. Which meant I had two cars since I still had that other car which belonged to my brother. But I felt bad using either of them at this point. I was actually going to ask my brother to sell the one I forced him to get me.

So for now I walked.

When I arrived, I waited for Blake near the entrance after letting the secretary know I was here. Unsurprisingly, he didn't make me wait for too long. "May," he said as he walked towards me.

I smiled at him and held out the coffee.

He chuckled before taking it. "Thanks. I really needed this," he said. "How are you? You had a lot of people worried with those phone calls you were making a couple days ago."

Great, people were talking about it.

I sighed. "I'm fine."

"Did you find him? Atem?"

I shook my head. "It was just... uh... just," I hesitated and scratched my head. "Just a moment of confusion."

Blake raised a brow but kept smiling. "Well, if your moment of confusion is enough make you talk to me for the first time in a year than that's good for me."

A year.

Wow.

"I came here to apologize about that," I said. "I'm sorry for being a such a jerk. Can we still be friends?"

He smiled at me as he leaned against a wall. "We were always friends, May," he said. "I'm just glad you came to talk to me. But really... what's been going on? Why the sudden change of heart?"

I leaned against the wall next to him and placed a hand on my head before sipping my coffee. "I guess you can say I was cursed by the gods for my bad behaviour. I spent an entire year babysitting a jerk that turned out to not be jerk. Then I fell in love with him... really, *really* in love with him," I let out a breath. "And then I woke up."

Blake laughed, "dramatic."

I looked at him and smiled.

"Was this jerk the guy named Atem?"

"Yeah," I sipped some more of my coffee.

He laughed again. "That must have been quite the dream."

I nodded slowly, looking at the floor. "You would work out with him every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. And you gave me some really good advice about him."

Blake hesitated for a moment, looking at me. When I looked back at him I saw a strange, surprised look on his face. But then he nodded. "Hmm," he started, "I'm getting that weird déjà vu feeling, you know."

I started to smile... something about that made me happy.

And after that he talked to me for as long as his boss would let him, and then I went for a walk.

I stopped by the pet store and looked around for a bit. I obviously wasn't going to buy a new cat... no cat could replace Neferkitti. But maybe... I kind of hoped

that I would find her.

Maybe she'd be at the pet store.

Of course, I wasn't as lucky as I hoped I would be.

I talked to the pet store owner and asked her if she knew about any Egyptian Mau's that were either up for adoption, for sale, or missing but found by them.

She opened up a webpage on her computer and told me to scroll through. Despite not having very high hopes of finding her, I scrolled through the pages and pages of cat ads. I stayed for a couple hours, looking as well as I could but I was right though... none of them were her.

I sighed, thanked the storeowner and then left.

As I walked home, I twisted Atem's father's ring around my thumb, deep in thought. I remembered Atem's father telling us in Egypt that some things had changed here because I had spent too much time in Egypt. Well, that was obviously true.

And maybe Neferkitti not being here was one of those things that had changed.

I sighed, wishing so much that that wasn't the case.

I needed her more than I thought I did.

Having her here would make me feel so much better... she would make me feel less crazy... she would be a piece of that other life that was still a part of me and still visible.

After sighing loudly once more, I let go of the ring around my thumb and continued walking, but then I was startled by a shout.

"Betsy!" I heard someone shout. "Jesus, Betsy stop right now! Where are you going? Help! Someone stop her!"

I turned around in the direction of the voice and felt my heart stop.

As if someone or something or some-whatever had heard my prayers, I saw

Neferkitti running towards me. Egyptian Mau's were fast... *very* fast, but for some reason it felt like she was running towards me in slow motion.

However, I knew that a second ago, she was meters away from me, and by the time I got down on my knees, she was already in my arms. She purred and rubbed her head against me as I immediately burst into tears.

The gorgeous brunette who was chasing after her in her pajamas stopped running, looking shocked.

I practically lost it.

I was so happy. This was the happiest I had been since I got back here. "Neferkitti..." I whispered as I kissed her.

She responded to the name, meowing and cuddling against me as I lifted her up and got onto my feet.

The brunette looked at me as I tried to wipe away my tears. "Wow..."

I hesitated, "sorry... I..."

"She's been acting crazy this entire week... this is the first time she's settled down," she sounded a little creeped out and worried.

"I... uh—" I hesitated, worried that she was going to take Neferkitti away from me. Was Neferkitti hers? Was that how it was in this life?

"She literally jumped out my window from the second floor... I had a heart attack!" The brunette laughed nervously.

"Is she yours?"

"Kind of..." The brunette said. "I adopted her two weeks ago. The girl who gave her to me was trying to get her adopted for a year... apparently the adopters would always return her cause she was one crazy cat... I was actually going to return her soon too."

"No!" I said, quickly. "I'll take her. Please, let me take her!"

The brunette's eyebrows rose, but she looked at Neferkitti. "Well... Betsy does seem to love you."

Betsy. I thought. Betsy. They named this glorious queen of a cat Betsy? She doesn't even look like a Betsy! Not that Betsy is a bad name... but I mean they could have named her Beatrice or Isabella or something more royal sounding.

Maybe that's why she hated you all.

Of course... no name was better for her than Neferkitti.

This was my Neferkitti.

"Can I get your contact information? I think I should let the original owner know—"

"Yes. Yes!" I said, quickly. "Yes! What's your number? I'll send a text to it right now with my name, address, everything!"

The brunette laughed before telling me her number. After sending her my information, she asked me if I wanted her to go get the stuff she got from the owner for Neferkitti, but I said no. I said she can keep it for the next cat she gets.

And after that, I went home as fast as I could.

I spent the next couple hours just admiring my magnificent, beautiful, marvelous Neferkitti who seemed stuck to my side. I was stuck in my room again as the two of us just bonded. It was so weird to think that she actually *missed* me. Did she, like me, still have her memories?

Though I wouldn't be surprised.

Cats were magical...

So magical.

I stroked her fur while lying on my bed. She was on top of me, curled into a ball over my chest as I pet her. It was only after a couple hours that she lifted her head up and jumped off my chest.

I sat up and watched her as she walked over to the notebook that was still lying on my bed. She rubbed her head against it before looking up at me.

"You miss him too, huh?" I asked her.

She meowed her response.

I smiled at her before reaching out and petting her. "Of course you do... you loved him way before I even did... and maybe he loved you way before he ever loved me."

She walked back over to me and curled up into a ball, licking my fingers before closing her eyes.

Everyone kept giving me credit for what had happened to Atem... but really, I realized now that as strange as it sounded, Neferkitti deserved some of that praise too. She was his hero too.

And right now... she was mine.

I needed her here so badly, and now that she was here, I actually felt so much better.

I stayed on the bed beside her for another little while until I felt my phone buzzing. I got a text. When I opened it, I saw that it was from Aunty Maya.

Hey hun, just got home. Sorry it's late but I sent you all of my clearest images of the Great Akhenatem. =) Enjoy <3 <3 <3

I sat up, making Neferkitti raise her head. I pulled my laptop from my side table drawer and opened up my email almost immediately after I got the text.

When I opened Aunty Maya's email, I had to pause for a moment. Neferkitti rubbed her head against me, as if trying to make me feel better. I looked down at her and smiled before lifting her up and putting her in my crossed legs. I'm sure she wanted to see the pictures too.

Then I opened up the attachments.

I let out a breath as I clicked through the pictures. A couple of them were those

wall paintings... a classic image in which all the Pharaoh's looked exactly the same.

But when we got to the statues, I felt my heart beat faster as I got a little dizzy. The statues... were more personalized.

The one I was looking at was him.

I knew it was him.

It looked exactly like him.

It showed his square jaw and low forehead and slightly frightening glare that his face was always in. Unlike many of the other statues of Pharaoh's, Akhenatem was not shown smiling.

I wasn't surprised though.

What bothered me about this statue though... were the eyes. They looked lifeless... and plain. My aunty told me once that some these statues may have once been painted beautifully... they may have painted in pupils before. But after thousands of years, the paint just disintegrated off.

Maybe when this statue was once painted, it showed his dark, *dark* eyes. They would have painted his eyes with their darkest black, that's for sure.

Neferkitti meowed, lifting her head and looking up at me.

And after a moment of contemplation, I printed out the image of his statue. When I retrieved it from the printer, I stared at it once more.

I was sad.

Miserable.

How was this fair?

What did *I* do to deserve this?

I was so in love with him and the stupid universe took him away from me. I mean, *fine* I could wrap my head around Atem being punished even though he

totally proved that he was had changed himself... but me?

I stuck the paper on my wall with tape as my eyes started to water.

The last thing he asked me to do was to be happy.

How was I going to be happy? In this world... where everyone had forgotten who he was.

I was *alone* now.

I was the only one who had these memories. There was no one I could talk to, no one who could help me cope. And even if I tried to explain it to someone, they would think I was crazy.

My lip began to quiver as I took a deep, shaky breath.

I was trying not to cry because I wanted to do what Atem asked me to do. I wanted to try and be happy. And for some reason, I equated not crying to being happy.

So I wiped my tears away.

And just as I turned around, I remembered something.

There was one last person I hadn't made amends with.

~ † ~

The bell of her shop jingled as I walked in. I was holding Neferkitti in my arms, since I didn't have any supplies for her just yet, so when Grandma Seetha looked up from the cupcakes she was icing, she was surprised.

"May, honey..."

"Hi, Grandma Seetha."

She walked around the counter towards me, "when did you get a cat?"

I put Neferkitti down, "I promise she won't go behind the counter. And today, actually. Her name is Neferkitti."

Grandma Seetha hesitated, before chuckling. "What a lovely name."

After a moment of just smiling at her, I walked over to her and gave her a tight hug, definitely surprising her.

But she hugged me back. "How are you, sweetheart?" She asked. "You really had me worried the other day."

"I'm fine... and I'm sorry."

"Did you find the young man you were looking for?"

I shook my head and pulled away. "No... but it's okay. I'm okay."

She watched me carefully for a moment with her kind eyes. "I missed you, dear."

I smiled.

In this alternate life... I didn't work in a cake shop. In fact, I didn't bake. I barely ever went to visit Grandma Seetha after I graduated high school and that was probably why she missed me.

"Can you hire me?" I asked her.

Her eyebrows rose in surprise, "hire you?"

I nodded. "You'll be surprised, but I'm an excellent baker."

Grandma Seetha chuckled. "I believe you," she said. "Aunty Maya mentioned to me once that you bake well."

"Wanna see my skills?" I was already walking towards the counter, making Grandma Seetha laugh.

She thought I was kidding.

But I spent the rest of the evening baking a cake and icing it to the best of my capability.

Then, when I was done I *really* surprised her. So she hired me, no questions asked.

And this was the beginning... of me trying to get things back to normal. I knew it would never be the same ever again but I was going to try my best.

I promised Atem that I would be happy and move on. It was going to be hard, and to be honest, I don't think I'll ever move on. But I *was* going to try and be happy.

I mean, after everything we'd gone through, that was all he asked from me. Maybe I owed that to him... because if he really loved me, which I knew he did, then he lost something to.

We were both in the same situation right now. The only difference was that he was about three thousand years in the past. So I guess it wasn't *right now* but... you get the point.

I sighed loudly right before Grandma Seetha kissed my forehead. "It's good to have you back, May."

When I looked at her, I saw her smiling at me... looking relieved. "Have me back?" I asked, wondering what she meant.

She blinked once before looking a little confused. "I actually don't know what I meant there either."

I chuckled, but deep down, I kind of knew...

I kind of knew that the universe... the gods... the God... whatever you believed in... Whatever you believed in couldn't completely take loved ones away.

Not completely.

Aunty Maya told me while I was in Egypt that the love we felt could never be a lie. No matter what the wizard did, the love we felt couldn't end up being a lie... or nonexistent.

Grandma Seetha loved Atem too, obviously not the same way as I did, but enough for her to maybe, deep down, not have forgotten him and the life we had with him completely. Just like Blake and Neferkitti... and maybe the others too.

They knew *something*.

And somehow, for now, that was enough to make me smile for real and move forward.

~ † ~



HEY EVERYONE!!!!!!!

Thank you so much for all the comments and support in the last chapter!! I loved reading what you guys had to say and it made me more excited to post

the next chapter! I know things are looking a little rough for May right now, but don't worry, I won't keep you waiting for long!

The next chapter will be up within the next two or three days! So you won't have to wait long! =D

As always, thanks so much for voting and bringing this story into the top 50 in Fantasy!!!!!! YAYYYYYY!!!!!!! <3 Please don't forget to keep voting and commenting and follow if you aren't already following! =D

Thanks so much everyone!

Love,

Luckycharms!



Chapter 48 - [Beauty and Four Years Later]

I never ever forgot him. Not a day went by without me thinking about him at least once. Maybe it had to do with the fact that I was once in love with him... or maybe it had to do with the fact that I knew now that he had changed my life.

But whatever the case may have been, I never forgot him, and I was sure glad I didn't.

Four years passed since that miserable day where what I believed was reality came crashing down, forcing me into a new reality that I didn't understand.

I was twenty-three now... going on twenty-four. I was much older. More mature. Different.

But at the same time, completely the same.

Obviously, in four years a lot had changed. For starters, I had graduated from university with a Bachelor of Arts. Yay me. And now I was finishing off teachers college. I was currently doing a sort of internship as a student teacher at the Victoria Anne High School.

A history student teacher, unsurprisingly.

It was pretty great.

I quite enjoyed working with kids... and people said I was a good teacher too.

"May? May... Mayaleena?"

I blinked before smiling at the young Mr. Rossi. Or Andrew, as he asked me to call him outside of class. "Sorry," I said as I straightened up, "I was just thinking

of something."

It was his spare, the only period during the day that he had off, and he asked me out to coffee. So he pushed the coffee towards me, "large, triple-triple, right?"

I nodded with a smile. "Thank-you."

Andrew Rossi was a very handsome teacher. It was obvious that all the young girls in his class had a big crush on him, and I didn't blame them. He had lovely blue eyes and a kinds smile. He was also very friendly and cared *a lot* about his students. Plus, he even had a little bit of a British accent since he was originally from London.

He was the teacher who was supervising me during this internship. He was sort of like my mentor. He was great too since he gave great advice and was really friendly, always pushing me to try my best and telling me I was doing great.

Also, he definitely had some sort of interest in me.

"So, you probably figured out why I took you out, but I was hoping I could ask you out to the movies this weekend?"

Aha!

I was right.

Despite knowing he was going to ask me out, I pretended to be shocked before smiling sympathetically. "That's really sweet of you, Andrew, but I already have a boyfriend."

Actually... I was married.

Mr. Rossi looked surprised. "Oh... oh, well this is quite awkward."

I chuckled.

"So, who is this lucky man, may I ask?" He asked before sipping his coffee.

I pulled out the lie I had been using for the past four years when a guy asked me out. I mean, it didn't happen often but the lie worked every time.

"He's a PhD candidate... under my aunt. He's in Egypt right now," I said. "Which is probably why you have never seen him."

"An Egyptologist?" He asked with his British accent.

I nodded.

"Well, he is indeed a lucky guy. I hope I can meet him soon. What's his name?"

I smiled before I answered his question. "Atem."

It wasn't completely a lie. Technically I was still married to him despite the fact that we were no longer together. I hadn't taken part in any sort of divorce and I decided that I would keep it that way until I was ready to move on.

And right now was definitely not the time to move on.

When we got back to class, apparently most of his students had figured out that he had tried to ask me out. Kids were much smarter than we gave them credit for.

"She said no, didn't she!" One of the boys who looked like a bad boy but was pretty sweet shouted.

I expected some laughter but instead, everyone started to shout their words of condolence to their teacher.

Mr. Rossi chuckled. "Apparently, Miss. Khan isn't single," he said, giving me a funny smile.

I was glad he was taking it like a champ.

"Really?" A girl in the class asked. "Miss. Khan may be lying!"

I chuckled. Though this was a personal topic, I kind of liked how open Mr. Rossi was with his students. "I'm not lying," I responded. Well, I sort of wasn't.

Mr. Rossi waved his hands at his students. "Alright, alright, quiet down, let's get to work. I don't want to be more embarrassed than I already am."

Everyone laughed at that, but definitely did what their teacher said.

For a class of grade 11s, they sure were well behaved... and I had to admit, these kids made me more and more excited about becoming a teacher.

After class was over, I stayed back for about twenty minutes to help Mr. Rossi with some photocopying for the next day. Once I was done that, I placed all the photocopies on his desk in the History Office before grabbing my purse and a couple of my books and heading out.

I was walking down the hall when I heard one of the students call my name.
"Miss. Khan!"

When I turned around, I saw the very popular, but also very intelligent Aubrey rushing over to me.

She was a very pretty girl, and in terms of looks, reminded me a bit of Aurora. She had bright, red hair, which I assumed was dyed since it was an unnatural kind of red, and lovely green eyes.

She was definitely one of the top students in the history class... but it was also easy to tell that she wasn't one of those naturally smart people. She was a hard worker. She worked *very* hard to get her good marks. Also, from what I knew, she was very well liked among her peers.

"Hey Aubrey," I smiled.

When she caught up to me, she smiled too. "I know you're heading out... but I was wondering if you could just hold on for a bit... I kind of wanted to ask you something."

"Yeah?"

She nodded, "I mean... I could go to the guidance councilor, but you know the lady, she's old and grouchy."

I laughed.

She suddenly looked shy, blushing a little under her fair skin. "And... well... you seem young and cool and now we know you have a boyfriend so I wanted to talk to you about it."

I was flattered. "Yeah, sure... I was going to stop by the café down the street before I headed home. Wanna talk there?"

She looked relieved, "sure!"

So we walked to the café together, chitchatting about class. When we got there, I bought her and I an iced coffee and we sat down near a window seat to talk.

"So since you came to me after you found out about my boyfriend... I'm assuming this has to do with yours?"

Her cheeks were very red as she nodded, "do you know him? Danny?"

I nodded. "Well, I don't know him. I see him walking you to class all the time."

"Yeah, that's him! He didn't take history because he thinks it's stupid."

I mouthed 'loser,' making her laugh out loud.

"That's what I said!"

I chuckled, "so what's up?"

She took a deep breath and then let it out. "So Danny and I have been dating for a year now and things are good. I haven't had any problems you know, despite him being, in my opinion, one of the cutest guys in the school," she started. "But the thing is... now that it's been a year... I feel like I'm feeling some sort of pressure..."

"Pressure?"

She nodded. "From everyone..."

I hesitated.

I didn't know how much help I'd be to her, I'd never dated in high school. I was a nerd who had really only one real friend, and that was Ro. Aubrey however was one of those Queen Bee's.

We were very different people.

Aside from the fact that we were both smart.

She took another breath, seeing that I didn't really get where she was going. "My education is *really* important to me. I know that's rare and you don't see that with popular high school kids much... but I really, *really* care about school."

"And I can tell," I said with a smile. "It's obvious that you try very hard to do well."

"Thank you!" She said smiling happily, but then it faded. "My dad's sick... and when I say sick, I mean like, real serious back issues sick. My mom left us when I was a kid because my dad's issues were just getting worse as time passed. He works as a mechanic, which doesn't help his situation, but he does it for me. To provide for me."

I felt my heart begin to sink. "Your father seems like a wonderful person."

"He is," she said, smiling sadly. "And he's the reason I work so hard. I want to make him proud, I want him to see me get a great job and I want to help him with his problems before it's too late."

"You're a wonderful daughter."

"Thanks... but the reason I'm telling you this is because my hope to do well in school is exactly what prevents me from getting too deep in this relationship with Danny, you know? Making my father proud is more important to me."

"And that's fair."

"Yeah, but now that a year has passed... there's this pressure... this pressure for..."

And now I was starting to get it, "sex."

She nodded quickly. "Yeah. Sex."

Now I nodded, but slowly, taking a sip of my iced coffee as I thought. "Is it *him* that's pressuring you?"

"I'd be lying if I said no. But... not really. He's a guy, you know. He and his

friends evaluate their man-li-hood by seeing who gets laid the most, and I think *that's* pressuring him to pressure me. And my friends are wondering what's going on too... they think that us doing it is the only way to prove that things are going smoothly in a relationship."

"That's definitely a high school mentality."

She chuckled.

"So you want advice, right?"

She nodded, "I'd love some."

"Okay, but before I start, let's get one thing straight... do you *want* to have sex with him?"

She hesitated, thinking for a moment, before sighing. "Not *now*."

"Well then that's that, Aubrey. No means no. You have to make that clear."

She was a little surprised by that, her eyes widening slightly.

"At your age, it's hard to understand it... it was hard for me too... but sex is *not* the ultimate goal in a relationship. The ultimate goal is love as cheesy as that sounds."

She chuckled.

"I mean, anthropologically speaking, sex and love aren't exactly locked together as one. You don't have to *love* someone to have sex with them," I said, making her look at me with a surprised look of realization. "And these *rules* that you and your boyfriend and your friends and his friends follow... they're all irrelevant and make it harder for you to get to the real ultimate goal," I said, thinking of Atem.

She listened to my carefully.

"My..." I hesitated, "my boyfriend taught me that. It was hard for me to understand, but you see, he came from a society where things are much more simple. He told me that what his people believed in was that you have to be yourself and do what *you* want. Forget about what his friends and your friends

are saying and thinking. Forget about this pressure you feel. In the end, this relationship is about *you* and *him*."

She started to nod her head.

"And if the both of you can't get those voices of other people out of your head when it comes to your relationship, then you're falling into a trap. Your relationship is being controlled by people who don't even matter and that means you're not being yourself in that relationship. That's not going to work out, Aubrey."

"Wow," she started. "I never... thought about it that way."

I smiled at her. "Talk to your boyfriend... If you agree with me then tell him what I said. If he doesn't agree—"

"Break up with him?"

I let out a laugh. "Well, I was going to say try and work it out... but if that doesn't work and you feel like there's no other option then yeah. Break up with him," I said. "You're a beautiful, young, kindhearted girl, Aubrey. I have a feeling he'll understand, but if he doesn't, you'll definitely find someone else who will."

She smiled, looking a little relieved. "Thanks Miss. Khan."

"You're welcome... I hope I helped."

"You did!" She said. "I'm definitely going to tell him this... and I'll let you know what happens."

"Good," I sipped my coffee.

"But, if you don't mind me asking," she started, "how long have you been dating *your* boyfriend?"

I let out a breath, feeling my heart sink a little. "A little less than five years," I lied. "We're practically married."

The second half wasn't a lie. I mean, we had yet to get a divorce.

She let out a laugh, "do you two live together?"

"We... sort of do," I said. "He's in Egypt right now, that's where he's from so he went back home."

"Egypt?" She scoffed.

I nodded.

"Wow! You must miss him, huh?"

I smiled, twirling my straw in my drink in an attempt to melt the ice. "More than anything in the whole wide world."

~ † ~

Once I felt like Aubrey was satisfied, we parted ways and I drove home. For the whole ride, all I could really do was hope that I gave her some advice that really helped. She was a great girl... greater than I thought she was prior to our little talk. She deserved the best, that's for sure.

When I got home, Neferkitti came rushing to the door.

She missed me whenever I left her since she was all alone, and that broke my heart. When Atem was here, she was never alone for *that* long, but now I lived alone, so there was no one to keep her company.

And that was why I liked to spend as much time with her as I could when I was at home.

After I took a shower and dried my hair off and dressed in something comfortable. I hadn't changed too much in the last four years, aside from the fact that I was slightly taller and not as skinny. I think my weight had returned to how it was in that other life of mine, but at the same time I was healthier. I ate healthier now... not to be skinny but to keep me from dying of heart disease one day.

I loved macaroni and cheese but I wasn't gonna let it kill me.

I grew out my hair again, so it was as long and as full as I liked it... as Atem liked it too... but that was besides the point. It kept me warm in the winter, which meant it was long enough.

I had passed that stage of hormonal teen-hood, so my skin was thankfully a lot clearer these days. I did get that horrid pimple here and there but nowadays I was more comfortable with not wearing makeup all the time. I still *loved* my makeup though. That was something that didn't change.

I had gone back to my comfortable style of girly-girl with a hint of lazy. I liked my dresses and I liked my jeans and t-shirts. No crop tops. Not that there was anything wrong with them... Ro rocked them like crazy. They just weren't *my* thing.

But in terms of looks, I was happy. I felt like myself and that was what was important.

Once I was comfortable, I picked a book and let Neferkitti snuggle up against me while I read on the couch.

I still liked to read, all the time.

But there wasn't a time where I hadn't picked up a book and wondered if Atem would like it or not.

My book collection grew a lot in the last four years. It grew so much that I bought myself a huge bookshelf and put it in Atem's old room. It was almost filled with books now.

All of them were great books too, I've read them all at least once.

Well, all but one.

There was one book on that shelf which I had yet to touch... World renowned Egyptologist Aunty Maya's book.

She had been working on it for a long time now, and published it last year. Obviously, as her niece, I got a copy. For free.

And if you're wondering what the book is about... well you probably already guessed it.

Akhenatem.

In fact, that was the title of the book. Simply, "Akhenatem."

It had a subtitle too, saying, "the cursed king," which was what got everyone's attention. It became a bestselling book that many people loved despite being a non-fiction history book... and I still hadn't read it yet.

I looked at it at least a thousand times, sitting on my bed or the couch or the kitchen table just staring at the cover. And speaking of the cover, it was a rather lovely picture of one of his statues. It looked pretty epic, taken from the bottom right hand side of the statue, making it look like the statue was looking off in the distance.

And the statue did look kind of like him...

But despite the fact that I had pretty much memorized every aspect of that book cover, I hadn't actually opened it up and read the book.

I'm sure it's not that hard to guess why...

Reading this book would be like accepting that Akhenatem was really gone. Gone, dead and never to be seen again. And I guess that even after four years, I was not ready to do that.

So I shook my head and opened up a different book. This one was a fantasy about a bunch of unrealistic things which I knew now could entirely be possible.

But just as I opened it up, my phone began to buzz. I picked it up and looked at the screen, seeing a text from Aunty Maya.

Hey Princess! I know you may be busy but dinner at my place TONIGHT. If you don't come I'll hit you! ;) Bring the Queen.

I chuckled, but was pleased to see that text. I wasn't exactly in the mood to cook tonight. So I put down the book, got ready and headed out with The Queen, also known as Neferkitti.

When I got to Aunty Maya and Uncle Ethan's place, I rang the doorbell and heard squealing.

Grandma Seetha was the one who opened the door and as I said hello, the three year old Kiya came charging out, squealing my name. I knelt down and grabbed her in a hug as Grandma Seetha laughed, sounding exhausted.

"May!" Little Kiya shouted.

I lifted my cousin up in my arms and walked in, Neferkitti following closely behind me. "Hey Kiya," I kissed her cheek and she reciprocated with a slobbery, wet kiss on mine.

Kiya was Aunty Maya and Uncle Ethan's baby girl. They had her a year after all the craziness happened to me and I have to say, she played a big role in helping me get over it.

I spent a lot of time with her when she was a little baby, and she helped me take my mind off of Atem and the past.

Aunty Maya walked out of the kitchen, grinning. "Hey, May," she started. This was my first time seeing her since she flew in from Egypt a couple days ago, and I was glad to see she looked well. "Kiya painted a picture and has been dying to show it to you!"

"Really?"

Kiya nodded her head vigorously, her black hair, which was in pigtails, loosening as she did so. "In my room!"

"Alright, let's go see it!"

I walked into her playroom and saw a huge paper spread across her tiny table. On it were handprints, everywhere.

I chuckled as I put her down.

She ran to the painting, picked it up and held it for me, looking at me happily with her bright brown eyes. They were the exact same as Aunty Maya's. "It for you!"

"Really?"

She nodded vigorously again.

"Why thank you!" I said as I took it from her. "I'll hang it on my wall."

She grinned before grabbing my hand and pulling me towards her painting table. "Paint with me!"

And so, the two of us painted a picture while Neferkitti sat very far away and watched. The last time she got too close, she was covered with blue paints before she could even realize what was going on.

Once the food was ready, Kiya sat in her high chair as we all ate Aunty Maya's delicious meal.

Everything was great. We were all happy and enjoying a great meal and talking like a family.

I always had a good time when I was here with them. What was especially fun was to watch how Uncle Ethan interacted with Aunty Maya.

He absolutely cherished her. It was almost as if he just knew how it felt to lose her. But then again, maybe he did. Maybe, like how Grandma Seetha and Blake had a hint of a feeling of Atem being in their lives, Uncle Ethan had that same hint of what it was like in that other reality.

It was *this* reason that I was kind of grateful for things being this way.

Uncle Ethan deserved Aunty Maya. He deserved the happiness.

He was such a great man, after all.

My relationship with my father was still tense in this reality, as you can imagine, since I became a teacher in the end. And my relationship with my mom, well... in that other reality, she realized her fault when she found out Atem was my boyfriend from Grandma Seetha, but since that didn't happen this time around, she and I weren't close either.

I was, however, nicer to my mom.

Since I knew that even in that other reality, before she found out about Atem, she would call Grandma Seetha to check up on me. I was certain she did that here too. I knew she cared about me.

My dad and I however never talked. Ever.

And Uncle Ethan gladly took the place of my father figure this time around too, just like how he had before. He was a great man.

And Aunt Maya, well I had nothing to say about her except for the fact that she was a goddess from heaven. I loved her so much. I loved everything about her... and I was so glad she was alive and healthy and happy.

Even if it meant that their happiness meant Atem wouldn't be here... even if it all meant that I'd never completely be happy.

After we finished eating, Aunt Maya gave us all a strangely excited look, making us all quiet down. "So, I have something to tell you all."

Everyone looked at her, even Kiya quieted down.

"I kept this a secret from all of you, even Ethan, for a while now because I wanted to make sure that I was one hundred percent certain before I shared the news."

My eyes widened.

She was pregnant!

Again!

When Aunt Maya saw my eyes widen, she started to laugh.

"Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!" Kiya shouted.

Uncle Ethan watched her carefully, not too sure about what was going on, as did Grandma Seetha.

She took a deep breath before she spoke.

"We have *finally* found the tomb of Akhenatem!"

Both Grandma Seetha and Uncle Ethan gasped, Uncle Ethan getting up in absolute shock.

"What?" He practically. "Maya! This is *amazing*!"

"And to make it even better," she looked like she was trying to hold back her excitement, "so far there is evidence that it is *completely* untouched!"

Uncle Ethan scoffed, throwing his hands in the air. "This is going to be the greatest discovery since King Tut!" He half shouted.

"Papa surprised!" Kiya shouted and laughed and clapped her hands together.

Grandma Seetha got up and hugged Aunt May, "oh, my dear girl! This is your dream come true!"

While everyone celebrated for a good couple minutes, I just stared in shock, my smile fading away.

My heart started to race and my stomach sank to the lowest point it could possibly sink. I think my hands were shaking a little as I swallowed back the lump in my throat.

I didn't even realize everyone was looking at me.

"May?" Aunt May called, breaking my blank stare.

I looked at her, "Co—" I had to swallow back the lump in my throat. "Congrats—"

"Are you alright, honey?" She asked as she walked around the table towards me.

As I watched her walk towards me, I saw the silenced Kiya look at her dad with wide and worried eyes. "Why May cry?"

I was crying?

I hadn't realized I was crying.

Aunt May pulled me into a hug and that was when I started to realize it. I was crying.

I started sobbing.

The hiccups, the snot, the everything, just... right onto Aunty Maya's shoulder.

She rubbed my back, trying to calm me down, but I couldn't calm down. Something inside me wouldn't let me calm down. Even Uncle Ethan and Grandma Seetha joined to try and calm me down but they couldn't.

And poor little Kiya started to cry too.

I hated myself for this.

I absolutely hated myself right now.

This was Aunty Maya's moment. This was what she dreamed of. This was what she worked *so hard* to come to. And here I was, stealing her spotlight by crying. Here I was ruining her *greatest* moment.

But how could I not cry?

Akhenatem's tomb?

Atem's *tomb*.

He was dead.

Deep down I had hoped that maybe... eventually... some sort of magic would send him back here to me. But he died. And instead, time was bringing him back to me. Time was bringing me back his dead mummified remains.

I guess... my hopes had just came crashing down.

"I'm sorry," I said, pulling away from the hug. "I just—" I wiped my face with my sleeve, "I should go."

"May, please... tell me what's wrong?" Aunty Maya asked.

"Aunty Maya," I started before hugging her tightly once more.

"Congratulations," I tried not to let my voice crack. "You worked so hard for this and I wish you all the best in everything you do. I love you so much."

"May—"

I got up from the chair, walked over to Kiya and kissed her wet cheek before smiling at her. "I'm okay, Kiya, you don't need to cry."

Her frowning lips quivered before she nodded.

"May, please—"

"I'll talk to you all soon," I said as I lifted Neferkitti into my arms. And before they could all call me again I rushed out of the apartment, leaving as fast as I could.

My sobbing recommenced on my drive home.

I know, dangerous.

But I couldn't help it.

I thought I had gotten over it, but clearly, I hadn't.

When I got home, I walked rather sadly into my bedroom and fell flat on my bed, on my face. Neferkitti followed me in, jumping onto my bed and climbing onto my back.

I stayed there like that for some time, before sighing and getting back up, causing Neferkitti to jump off my back.

I decided it was about time that I read Aunty Maya's book. Like I said before, I refrained from reading that book because reading it would mean accepting that he was gone, dead and never to be seen again.

But what was more proof of the fact that he was gone, dead and never to be seen again, than my Aunty finding his tomb?

I walked into the room that was once Atem's and picked up the book with his statue on it.

Akhenatem.

The cursed king.

By Maya Devarajah.

I wiped my hand over the cover, getting rid of the dust. My heart felt heavy... really heavy. But it was now or never.

Maybe this was what I needed.

Maybe this book would finally help me get over it.

Maybe completely understanding that he was gone was what I needed to help me move on.

Or maybe this would make it all a hundred times worse.

I guess I would find out soon.

I returned to my room with the book and sat on my bed, Neferkitti joined me, as if wanted to find out too. She sat down in my lap as I finally opened the book for the first time.

And all I can say was that I pretty much cried through the whole thing.

~ † ~

I knew it all, already. I knew everything about his past and his struggles and everything all up till the day we were separated. She wrote about all of that in detail and nothing should have surprised me.

Aunty Maya wrote about the curse. She wrote that the stories say he was cursed by a sorcerer who turned out to be his brother. She wrote that he was sent into the future, according to the inscriptions on Khamenatem's tomb. The tomb that was robbed in antiquity but discovered by Uncle Ethan.

She also wrote that the inscriptions said he fell in love with a woman who made him good again.

Then he came back to his home, where he defeated his brother who had started a

coup d'état with the Sea People against Akhenatem. However, the catch was that the defeat was only certain if Akhenatem gave up his love. And he did.

I knew everything up until that point.

According to Aunt Maya, apparently it was a magical story that was passed on through the royal family until the fall of Egypt to the Ptolemy's. It was a story that Pharaoh's used to remind everyone of their duty... that their role as protector of the Egyptian people came even before their own happiness.

I guess that was a little nice. Our misery became a story of what it means to be a true Pharaoh.

But the reason I started reading this book was to find out more about what happened after.

According to Aunt Maya, he ruled as Pharaoh for a few years after he saved his country from Tudhaliyas. But then he passed away. Many people believe that he was already suffering from severe injuries from the battle with Tudhaliyas, which is what caused his untimely death years later. Others believe he grew ill, as most people did in those days. But no one would know for sure until his body is found.

What they do know for sure is that after he died the title of Pharaoh was passed on to Khamenatem. Akhenatem had no heir to the throne. No children. So his title went to his brother.

Atem left a legacy though... which was why there were so many statues of him. Khamenatem didn't waste a single second when it came to treasuring and remembering his dear brother.

Aunt Maya had her own belief as to why she thought he died. She believed that he might have died from stress. She said that if the stories of his sacrifice are true, then maybe life just got too hard for him. Maybe losing the love of his life made him miserable. And *that* was what killed him.

He died because he loved someone so much.

Her conclusion was short. Short and simple.

But for me, heartbreaking.

"To the Egyptians, Akhenatem was the image of a noble king... a noble man lived his life well. He suffered and made many mistakes, like most men and women do, but when given a second chance he took it with everything he had. This story intrigues many because he changed for the better thanks to true love, and for a man who suffered so much, you only wish for him to have his fairytale ending.

"We know *nothing* about this mystery woman who changed him aside from the fact that she was true of heart and undeniably loving. Her kindness brought forth the light in his heart, a light that was strong enough for him to give up everything to do what was right... to fulfill his duty as the King of Egypt.

"Alas, this is not a fairytale. These people were real people, just like you and me, and our dear Pharaoh Akhenatem did not get his happy ending. We do not know what happened to his true love except that she could not be with him, and it may be her absence that led to Akhenatem's untimely death.

"But nonetheless, his legacy remained strong. He left an ideal that all his predecessors would dream of living up to. He saved his nation, and allowed it to live and prosper for another thousand years. His name is a name that is still spoken by the lips of many around the world today and his story continues to intrigue the minds of people like you and me...

"For we cannot help but sympathize for and be mesmerized by Pharaoh Akhenatem and his unknown lover. I know I for one hope that somehow, though the stories do not say it, he was reunited with her, because if the stories are real, the both of them deserved nothing less than each other."

Of course I was sobbing as I shut the book. I put it on my side table drawer and leaned against my headboard before hugging my legs.

Neferkitti was meowing continuously, as if trying to get me to calm down, but I couldn't help it.

I should have figured that he had died. I mean, he lived thousands of years ago. It wasn't possible. But like I said before... all that magic and all that sorcery stuff... I guess it made me hope otherwise, even after all these years.

And now, knowing that he was gone, and maybe gone because he *really* loved me... it hurt me so much.

Aunty Maya had found his tomb. She would open his tomb up with her fellow excavators and Egyptologists and archeologists and they'll find him. They would take his dead body and examine it and eventually his tomb would become a tourist attracting, just like King Tut's tomb.

And everyone who comes in will know nothing about him. Nothing. They'll read books and take pictures and listen to tour guides but they'll know nothing.

Absolutely no one in this entire world actually knows him. *No* one but me. And while everyone enjoyed the pleasure of taking a picture with his dead body, they would never know that there was a girl on the other side of the world who had lost pretty much everything... and that everything was the body that they were taking pictures with.

What was I going to do?

The worst part was, I had no one to talk to. No one to seek comfort in.

All I could really do was cry on my own in my room.

So I sat there for hours, crying until I had no tears left to cry. It was near midnight when I finally stopped crying and was just staring at the ceiling. But it was around that time when my cellphone rang.

It was Aurora.

I wasn't going to pick up at first, but I suddenly heard knocking at my door, followed by a text message from Ro.

I'm at your door, open up.

I hesitated, before wiping my wet cheeks with my bed covers and getting up and walking to the door. When I opened the door, she looked at me with worried green eyes before stepping in.

"May—"

And to both of our surprise, I hugged her.

I hugged her tightly and started to cry all over again though I felt a little relieved that my best friend was here.

She rubbed my back and hugged me too, shushing me as she tried to calm me down.

"I can't hold it back anymore," I whispered, still in tears.

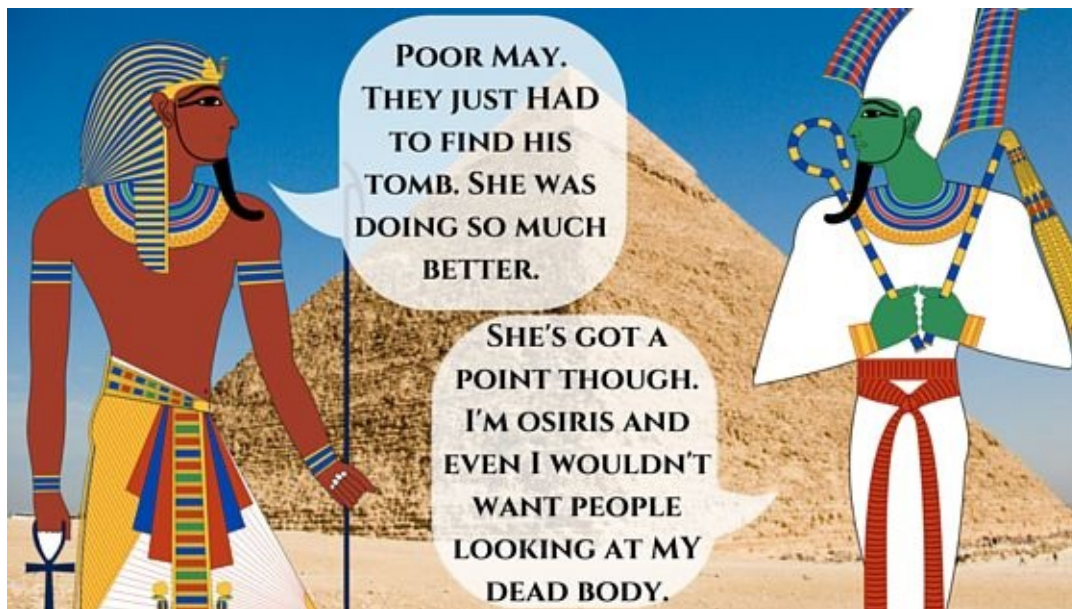
"Hold what back, hun?" She asked, still rubbing my back.

"I *need* to tell someone. It's killing me... I can't do this."

She hesitated, not knowing what I meant.

But nonetheless, she continued to hug me. "I'm here for you, May. I'm all ears. Tell me everything you need to say."

~ † ~



My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 49 - [Beauty and Letting it Out]

I didn't end up getting a chance to spill out my heart to Aurora that night. She encouraged me to cry it all out first and in the process of doing so I found myself falling asleep thanks to her warm hug, Neferkitti's soft fur, and the comfort of my bed.

When I woke up the next morning, I was really happy to see Ro fast asleep next to me on my bed. It was nice to not feel alone and at least I knew now that I could tell it all to her. I could finally let it all out.

So I got up and brushed my teeth and cleaned myself up but as I stepped out of the bathroom, I heard rattling in my kitchen.

At first I thought it might have been Alec, since I didn't see why he wouldn't come over since Ro was here. But when I walked into the kitchen, I smiled, happy to see Aunty Maya.

She looked at me with exhausted, yet happy eyes. "Good morning, princess. I made you and Ro breakfast."

"Hey," I walked into her arms and hugged her.

She kissed my forehead and lifted my chin up for me to look at her before pushing my hair out of my face. "Look at your eyes, they're swollen."

I smiled, "I'm better now."

She pulled away from our hug and leaned against the counter, looking at me. "Honey... I need you to tell me what's going on," she said.

I nodded.

"Don't think I forgot that whole thing that happened four years ago... where you were running around looking for an Atem... and the fact that you avoid conversations about Akhenatem, and the fact that you cried when you found out about his tomb, and the fact that you didn't read my book—"

She looked happy when I said that, but she went back to speaking seriously. "May, I know *something* is going on and I need you to explain. I'm really worried."

I looked back at her for a bit and then sighed.

"Hey, May," I heard Ro call from behind me.

When I turned around, I saw the sleepy Ro walking towards the washroom.

"Can I steal a toothbrush?"

I chuckled. "I have a pack of new toothbrushes under the sink."

She gave me a salute before heading into the washroom. "Hey Aunty Maya."

Aunty Maya returned the salute with a funny grin.

When I looked back at her, I smiled. "Ro told me you sent her. Thanks... I kinda needed her last night."

She smiled back at me, "so are you going to tell me?"

I nodded. "I *need* to."

She looked relieved.

Once Ro came out of the bathroom, we all ate breakfast together before I was dragged to the couches to finally let it all out.

Both Aunty Maya and Ro looked at me with all of their attention and I sighed.

This was it.

"So... I don't even know how to start but... about seven years ago, Aunty Maya... you died."

Her eyebrows rose, "what?"

I rubbed my head, realizing that was not a good place to start... but I had no choice now.

"You were killed in a car accident, by a drunk driver. It wasn't fair but you died nonetheless. And right before you died you gave me your Ankh necklace."

In this world, while I wasn't a good kid prior to getting my memory back, I had begged Aunt May to use her necklace because it matched my outfit for a party I was going to.

And I lost it at the party.

Aunt May was devastated but pretended it was okay and I told her I would buy her a new one but she said it was fine. So I let it go too.

Man, was I a jerk.

"You gave me the necklace and I never took it off and all of us lived for two years without you. But on my eighteenth birthday, you came to me in a dream and told me a man was going to come and he was going to need help. You asked me to help him... and when I asked you for more information all you did was tell me he was a king."

Both of them were staring at me with utter confusion.

"Oh god, you two *already* think I'm crazy—"

"No, no," Ro said quickly. "Continue."

"Yes, continue May, just let it out."

I let out a breath and continued. "I didn't think much about it but that night on my birthday, like you said, this confused guy came out of nowhere and he had a sword and he was dressed like an Ancient Pharaoh and it was all the most craziest thing that ever happened in my entire life..."

"But nonetheless, because of that dream, I brought him here. I called Uncle Ethan and he too had a similar dream with you so he came here and we tested

the guy to see if he was legit and we basically found out that he..." I took a deep breath, looking at Aunty Maya, "he was Akhenatem."

Aunty Maya's eyes widened.

"He said he'd been cursed by a wizard... who by the way attacked me a couple days later... but I didn't believe him at first and I thought he was just crazy but as time went on things happened, like the wizard attacking, and I realized he was the real deal. The wizard cursed him and sent him here because he wanted to send him to a horrible, horrible place. And for some reason, the wizard believed that this place was the worst place in the universe... like, man did he really not like us.

"But Akhenatem... he didn't know how to read or write in English. So I had to teach him and eventually he joined me in working at Grandma Seetha's cake shop and he found out that the reason that the wizards curse sent him to me was because his mom prayed and prayed for his safety when he disappeared in his time. He could have been sent to so many horrible places but thanks to her he was sent to me.

"And as time went on, even though he was a total asshole... I started to... to like him, eventually. We lived together and we celebrated Halloween and Christmas and New Years... Ro, you were suspicious of him at first but he grew on you and you really liked him. Alec liked him a lot to. And even Blake... Blake would go work out with Atem three times a week in the morning. And Alec was the one who gave us Neferkitti, who still remembers Atem by the way, even though none of you do."

They were practically gawking, but I continued.

"And eventually, he started to warm up to me and open up. He told me about his past... how once his father died, his Hittite stepmom wanted her son to be King, so she tried to kill Atem and his family. Khamenatem's mom was killed by her. And Atem's mom was almost killed three times and that was how he snapped. He saved his mom the third time and he snapped. He ordered for all of her family in Egypt to be executed while she and her son, Tudhaliyas, were sent to jail.

I could see the amazement on Aunty Maya's face. Even though she may not believe what I was saying, I was sure she was shocked to see how much I knew

about him.

"So in an attempt to maintain order, he became mean... or evil as everyone likes to say. He ruled with an iron fist until the wizard cursed him and sent him to me... but anyways, time began to pass and we... fell in love with each other. It was tough, at first. I liked him first and he was being a jerk about it, but eventually it worked out.

"And then Atem started having nightmares so I gave him your Ankh necklace, Auntie Maya. I never lost it... I gave it to him. He has it!"

Auntie Maya's eyes widened, "my necklace..."

I nodded. "I gave it to him and it helped to get rid of his nightmares. You were magical... you helped him. And we even found out that you didn't die from a drunk driver... the wizard killed you. He thought you would help Atem but didn't think I would. So he killed you, masking it as an accident."

Auntie Maya let out a breath.

"But things started to get messy when Uncle Ethan found Khamenatem's body... he found out that he was killed by the Sea People in that reality... and that really hurt Atem, because Atem really started to realize that his people suffered after he was cursed. Egypt was completely destroyed by the Sea People. His mother died, his brother died... hundreds of other people died... when he really started to realize that, that's when things started to go down hill."

I took a deep breath, realizing that I was talking very quickly. I tried to slow down now, though neither of them told me to. "And then the wizard came back. He came back and he sent Atem back to Egypt... and he sent me there too."

"To Egypt?" Both Auntie Maya and Ro gawked.

I nodded.

"You went to Egypt? Like, Ancient Egypt?" Ro asked, trying to clarify.

I nodded again.

"They sent him back to moments before he was cursed and he took that chance.

He took the chance and fixed everything. He knew that the Sea People were coming so he prepared the army and marched to the Delta... but before that... I... well,"

They continued to stare, waiting for me to continue.

"We got married—"

"*What?*" Ro scoffed.

"Married?" Aunty Maya repeated.

I nodded. "We got married and... things happened... and then I met his brother, who's a *wonderful* man. Then Atem left me in Memphis and left to the Delta. And as they fought the Sea People, things got weird where I was staying... the wizard tried to kill me after you, Aunty Maya, came in my dream again and warned me about the fact that the Sea People had a secret attack coming, but Lord Hepu, the High Priest of Amun saved me. We went together, warned Atem who found out that the wizard was his brother all along, though Atem never sent his brother to jail like he told everyone he had. He showed Tudhaliyas mercy but Tudhaliyas didn't care.

"Then he and his brother fought. He would shoot his brother with a magic bow but he wouldn't die... then, they just faugh until the spirit of his father came and stopped them. His father told Atem that the reason why Tudhaliyas couldn't die was because *I* was there. Since I was from the future, I was disturbing *maat*. I wasn't meant to be there and the only way to save Egypt was for me to be sent home."

Aunty Maya looked like her breathing was speeding up.

She was shocked.

Maybe I had said something that shocked her... but then again, how could *all* of what I was saying not shock her.

Both she and Ro probably thought I was crazy.

"But... his father gave Atem a choice... Atem either had to pick between coming back here with me and allowing Egypt to be destroyed, or sending me back

alone in order to save Egypt—" I shrugged my shoulders, "—he picked to send me home alone and to save Egypt. And so I came home."

"So you're saying," Aunty Maya started, "that day that you were running around looking for Atem—"

"Was the day that it all came back to me. It was when I was sent back. But the future changed, since Atem was never here. You didn't die, for one, Aunty Maya. I was different... and lots of things changed. That's why I was so confused."

Aunty Maya and Ro looked at each other before looking back at me.

"I know... I *know* I sound *crazy*—"

"May," Ro started, "how *real* do you believe this is."

I hesitated.

"Is there any chance that you think maybe—"

"Ro... just think for a second, try your hardest to think about him. You have to feel *something*," I tried. Blake did, after all. "You liked him, *a lot*. You're even the one who helped me realize that I like him!"

Ro stared at me, before shaking her head. "Oh, hell no, this is so weird..."

I hesitated.

"I do... feel this strange... familiar feeling... I can't put my finger on it but it's like déjà vu..."

I started to smile, "really?" I mean, she could just be saying this to make me feel better.

She scratched her head. "I don't know..."

Aunty Maya just kept staring.

When I looked at her, she closed her eyes for a moment before looking back at me. "This is... Akhenatem?"

I nodded.

"So... if this is all true... then... *you* are the woman who saved him?"

I shrugged, "that's what people kept telling me... in that whole other life."

"I'm lost for words... May."

"I know it sounds unbelievable... but I will say that I do feel a lot better now that it's out there."

"Do you have anything?" Ro suddenly asked, "anything from when he was here?"

I hesitated before nodding and holding out my hand.

I still wore that ring around my finger. "It belonged to Atem's father. His mother gave it to me as a gift when I was in Egypt. This, and Neferkitti, are the only things I have from when he was here."

Ro took my hand in hers and examined the ring before Aunty Maya took a look. When she looked at it, she let out a breath. "May... this is... unbelievable."

"I don't blame you," I smiled.

Aunty Maya looked at me with a smile. "If you kept this from us for so long... you must have really suffered."

I chuckled. "I'm better now," I said. "I guess I just needed to talk about it with someone."

She held tightly onto my hand.

"Don't worry about me, I'll be fine."

She smiled warmly before pulling me into a hug. She usually had amazing advice all the time but I assumed that she was lost for words. I couldn't blame her... again, all of this sounded crazy. It wasn't going to be easy for her to wrap her head around.

After another short while, Aunty Maya had to head out. She was leaving back to

Egypt soon since all the paperwork related to excavating a tomb was done, so she had to pack and get ready.

Aurora decided to spend the next little while with me. I knew deep down that it was because she actually thought that I might be kind of crazy. She was worried about my sanity and didn't want to leave me alone.

Despite that, however, I was happy that she was here to keep me company.

Within the next couple days, it was time for Aunty Maya to fly out. She stopped by my place before she left and gave me a super tight hug... tighter than her usual hugs.

She told me that once she was back, we would properly sit down and discuss everything and I was fine with that.

I guess I realized now that it didn't really matter if they believed me or not. I was just glad that I had finally said it out loud.

~ † ~

The next day when I got to work, Mr. Rossi greeted me with a smile. One of the other history teachers, the young and recently married Ms. Brenar greeted me with an overly excited grin too.

"So, I heard from Andrew that you're dating an Egyptologist to be? That's sexy."

When I looked at Mr. Rossi he hesitated. "Was it supposed to be a secret?"

I chuckled before setting my bag down on my desk. "Well no,"

"So who is he?" Ms. Brenar asked. "Is he cute?"

I looked at her and then smiled sadly before looking down for a moment. "He *is* cute... but... we aren't together anymore."

Both Ms. Brenar and Mr. Rossi lost their smiles in an instant.

I chuckled, "you don't need to look so sad... I still love him more than anything in the world... and I'm sure he loves me too."

"I'm sorry," Mr. Rossi said, looking genuinely upset despite asking me out a short while ago. "May, I didn't realize..."

"Don't worry. The two of us just... it's about time we moved on with our own lives."

I promised him to move on. That's the promise I made to him.

I had to do that for him.

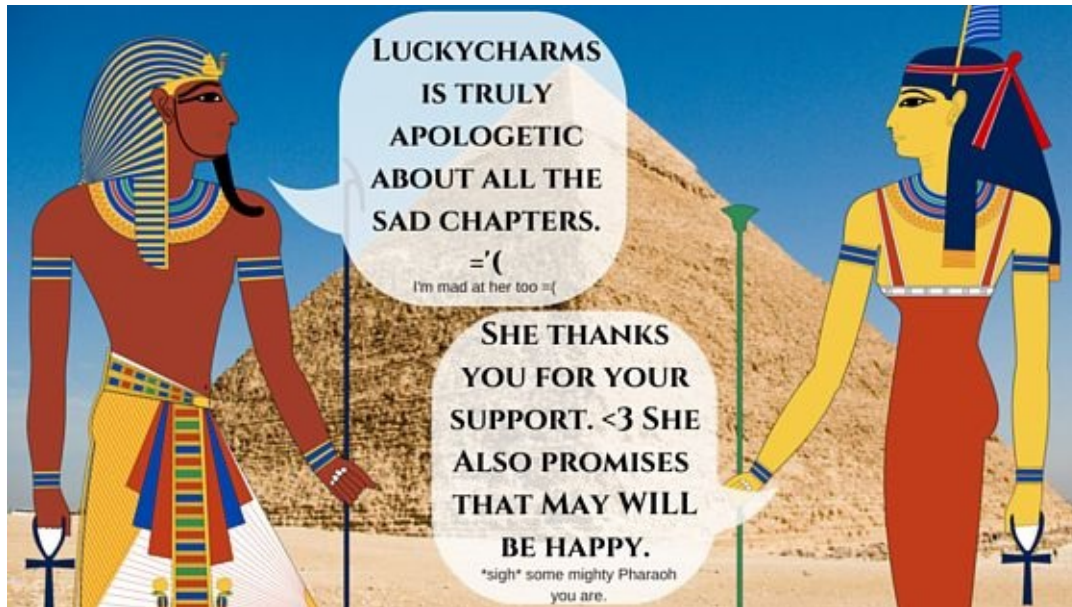
If he was somewhere out there watching over me then he'd be real disappointed in me right now. I didn't want that.

Not at all.

If he was really dead and never coming back then I wanted him to be happy.

So I smiled at Mr. Rossi and Ms. Brenar. "So," I started. "What's the lesson plan like today?"

~ † ~



Hey everyone!!

So I posted this chapter today as well because I was sure you all wouldn't be satisfied if I made you wait a week for *just* this chapter! I thought this would be a good chapter to just recap what's gone on so far as May explains it to her loved ones... I mean, it's about time she let loose right? It's already been 4 years!

I know the last couple chapters have been really sad!!!! =(But I promise that in the end, May will be happy, just like Akhenatem's father said she would be. =)

Thanks for sticking through! <3 Please don't forget to comment and vote and follow if you aren't already following!!!

See you in the next update!

Luckycharms <3

My Social Media!



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Chapter 50 - [The Tomb of Akhenatem]

When arriving in Egypt I'm usually thrilled. The smell of the air, the feeling on my skin... everything made a trip to Egypt absolutely wonderful. This time, I should have been more thrilled then ever. Tomorrow was the day we finally opened the tomb of Akhenatem, after all. The press was going to be there, many famous Egyptologists and scholars were going to be there, Egyptian officials were going to be there... it was going to be remarkable.

But instead, I felt rather gloomy.

Maybe even depressed.

What May had said to me a few days ago refused to leave my mind. I could not, no matter how hard I tried, push it out of my mind.

Part of me believed that she was just having a strange breakdown. Maybe the stress was getting to her. Maybe things were tough and she's hiding the real issue from me.

But I wasn't a psychologist.

I was an Egyptologist.

I was the last person on earth who could diagnose her behaviour.

However, despite that part of me that felt that way, my entire heart disagreed. The look on her face... the emotion in her eyes... all of that was so real.

Whatever she was going through was *real*, and it broke my heart to leave her behind in the middle of all this to pursue my own dreams.

When I got to the hotel, it was nine in the morning. I had a lot of meetings to attend later today to finalize everything before tomorrow, but for now, I thought a nap would do me some good.

Of course, I couldn't sleep.

All I could really think of doing was calling Ethan. So that was exactly what I did.

"Maya," he said when he picked up, just as I rolled over in the bed I was in. His voice was deep and husky and he sounded drunk with sleep.

"Hey, Ethan..."

"It's three in the morning here, Maya," he said. And despite the fact that he sounded annoyed, he still managed a chuckle.

Oh. I forgot about the time difference. "I'm sorry, honey. I didn't mean to wake you up."

"It's fine," he said, still sounding sleepy. "Are you okay?"

"Mhmm... got off the plane not too long ago," I started, "Is Kiya sleeping?"

"Yes," he said. "Right here. Listen."

After a moment, I assumed he put the phone near Kiya because I could hear her soft breathing. I smiled, my heart skipping a beat.

The only thing I hated about traveling to Egypt was leaving my little baby behind. That was why Ethan stayed back, despite wanting to be there for this legendary day. We made a promise when I got pregnant that one of us would be at home with Kiya at all times. We would never leave her without at least one of us.

"She's fine," Ethan said when he got the phone back. "Are you sure you're okay? You must be exhausted, you should sleep, Maya."

"I know," I started. "I tried."

"But you can't."

I let out a breath before turning in the bed and staring at the ceiling. "The entire thing with May..." I had told Ethan everything, positive that May wouldn't mind. Uncle Ethan was in the story, after all.

And as Aurora had felt that *déjà vu* sensation, so did Ethan... and it worried me more.

"Maya, don't feel guilty for leaving in the middle of that," he said, figuring it out in an instant. "May wouldn't want you to feel guilty. She already told us that she's going to try and move past it all."

"But what if it's all true, Ethan?" I asked. "What if she *is* that woman?"

Ethan hesitated. "Maya... I know you believe in magic and true love and soul mates and all those things... but time travel? A Pharaoh being sent thousands of years into the future?"

"You think she's lying?"

"No, *no*," he said. "I think she's going through some hard times and maybe mixing up reality and fiction. Obviously something huge happened in her life that she didn't tell us about and maybe—"

"You should have seen her face, Ethan," I sighed.

Ethan didn't say anything.

Both he and I knew that he was just trying to rationalize things. If anything, he was more confused than I was. After all, *he* was the one who had that *déjà vu* experience, not me.

"She's not making this up."

"I *know* she isn't making this up, Maya," he said, sounding a little more awake now. I could hear him turning in his bed. "You know what, if it makes you feel better, I'll go talk to her. I'll try to find out what she's thinking."

That wasn't what I wanted him to do, but I'm sure she'd love to spend some time

with her uncle so I didn't protest to that. "I'm... uh... Ethan, do you think me going through with this... with opening Akhenatem's tomb will make it worse for her?"

Ethan groaned. "So what are you going to do, Maya? Abandon your dreams and come home? May would be horrified."

I knew he was right, but that did not make me feel better.

"The last thing she wants is for you to leave all of this and come home, you know that."

"Why do I feel so bad about it then?" I asked. "One side of me is telling me to give it up while another is telling me to do it."

"You've been searching for his tomb for years now and you've found it. May *wants* you to do it... she doesn't want you to feel bad about it. If you were to drop everything and come home, she would know why and never forgive herself. *Ever.*"

"I know..."

"So stop worrying, I'll take care of May. I'll talk to her and try and figure it all out while you make history."

I chuckled.

"Rest, Maya. You have a big day ahead of you. Go into the Valley of the Kings and be the next Howard Carter. It's about time we had a woman make such a marvelous discovery."

I smiled, feeling just a tad bit better.

"May wants you to be happy, that's the kind of girl she is. She'd never want someone else's happiness to suffer because of her. Remember that, okay?"

"Yeah. I will."

"I love you, Maya. Make sure Vivian is recording everything so I can see it."

"Yes, my dearest husband," I said with a smile. "Goodnight, sorry for waking you."

"Goodnight."

I kissed into the phone and heard a chuckle before I hung up.

After thinking for a little while, I did as Ethan said and rested. He was right, after all. Tomorrow was a *big* day.

~ † ~

Despite my mixed feelings the day before, when I woke up the next morning I felt that there was no time to feel anything but excitement. I had so much to do, though I woke up so early. I was running around, unable to think of anything except for the fact that I was finally going to see Akhenatem and everything he was buried with.

By eight in the morning we drove out towards the Valley of the Kings. Akhenatem's tomb was well hidden, a safe distance away from the Valley of the Kings. It was so well hidden that a new road had to be built in order to get to him. It was almost as if he did everything he could from keeping it from being robbed.

To be honest, it may have been left untouched for a little longer... if only I hadn't come across a reference to it in one of Khamenatem's poems. One of his poems, which was hidden at the bottom of his sarcophagus was what gave it away. It was a poem about his brother and it had a couple lines in it that made me wonder.

"Behind the rays is where he sleeps,

Behind the rays is where he waits."

It was a beautiful poem... but those two lines stuck out to me. And I wondered if it meant where his tomb was. I assumed the rays were a metaphor for "the Peak,"

since the Peak was a natural, pyramid like cliff found in the Valley of the Kings.

Some scholars argued that pyramids were the symbol of sunrays... the sunrays that would help lift the Pharaoh's into heaven.

So if the "rays" were "the Peak," then the poem meant he was behind the Peak. That meant he was nowhere near all the other Pharaoh's.

I proposed this idea to other Egyptologists, the best in the field, and they seemed to think it was as good a hunch as any others.

And I was right.

Akhenaten hid himself very well. It was a part of the mountain that was very hard to access and for now, only myself, my three PhD students, a couple important people from the Egyptian National Museum, as well as other Egyptian students who helped in the excavation were the only ones allowed in the tomb for today. They were the only ones who'd be able to see it for the first time since it was closed.

But there were definitely going to be a lot of people watching from not so far back.

I was so excited.

When we got to the site, I got out of the jeep and took a deep breath. Despite knowing that I might have to talk to reporters, I was wearing my usual white top and green cargo shorts. It wasn't exactly cute, but it was the most comfortable clothing to wear while excavating.

I had my sunglasses on and my hair braided over one shoulder as I grinned at the gorgeous Iesha Amir from the Egyptian National Museum. "Good morning," she said, adjusting her beautiful blazer. "You look... comfortable."

I chuckled. "Good morning to you too, Iesha. You look lovely as always."

My good friend smiled, brushing her lovely brown locks over her shoulders, but sweating from the heat of the desert. "Today is your day, Maya," she said. "Our Minister of Antiquities, my colleagues and I have complete faith in you and we trust your judgment in how you will go through with the opening of this tomb."

"Thanks, Iesha... I really appreciate that," I said. It was nice to have a little control. It was also even nicer to know that hundreds of rich, important Egyptian officials trusted me enough to put this excavation completely in my hands.

"It's because of your kind personality and honest appreciation for our history. They like you," she said with a slight accent. "There is no way they would be so trusting with someone they didn't like."

"I'm so glad to hear that," I said. "You're coming in too, right?"

"I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"You might want to take off your blazer," I said as I began to make my way up to the entrance of the tomb. "It'll get dirty."

Iesha let out a snort before doing what I said. She even tied her hair up into a ponytail.

I took off my sunglasses and left them on a table at the bottom of The Peak before strapping my small backpack over my shoulders. It would be a little bit of a climb up to reach the entrance and it was time for me to get myself up there.

My PhD students, Aarvind, Vivian and Darcy followed closely behind me, as did Iesha, a couple Egyptian PhD students who worked as interns at the Egyptian National Museum, and two of Iesha's colleagues. Vivian prepared the video camera and shook her head. "Oh man, I wish Ethan was here."

"I do too," I said.

"I'm going to start recording now," Vivian said, "I want him to see it all!"

"Thanks, Vivian."

"This is the best day of my life," Darcy said as he practically jumped up and down.

"Be careful, Darcy! If you jump any more, you'll slip and fall down the cliff."

Darcy stopped jumping, but didn't stop grinning.

Aarvind, my very quiet and cool PhD student, just rolled his eyes and let out a breath, maintaining his cool... but even still, I could totally just see the excitement on his face too.

"So, Maya," Iesha called. "How do you feel about being the next Howard Carter?"

I laughed. "I feel great... I'm sure we'll find 'wonderful things,'" I said, quoting Howard Carter himself.

Iesha laughed.

When we reached the entrance, I took a deep breath and looked down into the staircase that led to a corridor that had already been cleaned out.

"Akhenatem was a smart Pharaoh," Iesha said. "He cared more about staying hidden than he did about sticking to the cultural norms." She was referring to the fact that he hid himself well away from his ancestors. He must have been so lonely for all these years.

"A genius, if you ask me," I said.

"A genius who is about to make you one of the most famous Egyptologists of the century!" Darcy shouted.

"Alright, alright," I laughed as I turned around. "I have a couple words to say to my students and the rest of you before we go down there."

The small group silenced and looked at me.

"Iesha knows very well I respect this culture and I want you to remember to respect it too. Remember, this is the resting place of a Pharaoh... a *King*. We're already doing enough damage by disturbing it but the least we can do is make sure we all treat it like a resting place, stay quiet, be calm and pay your respects to one of the greatest Pharaoh's that ever ruled Egypt."

Iesha nodded her head in agreement.

"Iesha, Vivian, Darcy, Aarvind and I will be first to go in. Iesha has been asked by the Egyptian National Museum for us to take pictures of everything prior to

touching it so we will do that first and call you in once we are ready."

"Congratulations Doctor Maya!" A student shouted, and suddenly everyone started clapping.

I chuckled before giving a little curtsy, thanking everyone and turning towards the tomb.

It was now or never.

"Let's go see 'wonderful things.'" I said, quoting Howard Carter again and walking down the steps.

It was a long staircase, leading deep into the cliff. Some scholars liked to argue that the Ancient Egyptians believed this staircase was the birth canal of the Pharaoh's spirit. He would rise from his sarcophagus and be reborn into the world after climbing up this staircase.

As a mother, I liked this idea.

I thought it was a beautiful image... a Pharaoh coming out of the birth canal which is his tomb, to be reborn into the world as a god.

A lovely image indeed.

Of course, as outsiders, we were doing exactly the opposite. We were going down into the tomb... or the womb, if we were going to keep that analogy of the birth canal going.

But I digress.

When we reached the end of the staircase, we walked down a short corridor. I didn't even need a flashlight just yet since the bright light of the sun was bringing a perfect amount of sunlight into the corridor.

At the end of the corridor, I saw that my hard working PhD students had already taken down the wall that blocked our way while I was back at home. In its place, stood a lovely, tall double door. "You did a great job," I said. "There doesn't look to be a single scratch on the door."

"Absolutely stunning," Iesha said. "The doors look brand new."

I looked at her with a grin, "shall we?"

She nodded, smiling. "Please."

I could feel my breathing hastened as I put my hands on the doors. As I pulled it open, the door creaked loudly, and the more I opened the more light came pouring into the large antechamber. This was probably the first time in thousands of years that this room got any light and I swear the thought was absolutely remarkable.

Light filled the room to the best that it could, the sun's rays reaching just far enough to bring light to the decorated walls and statues that stood right in front of the door. Everything to the left and right of us were still dark, but it was nothing a flashlight couldn't handle. This ceiling was pretty high up, making this tomb taller than most other tombs, but that just meant there were more inscriptions for us to look at, and that was marvelous.

But I stood there... frozen. "Oh... wow."

I stood there in absolute amazement, as I stared at all the hieroglyphs and all the images. Everything I had worked for... all of it had led to this. The wall inscriptions were absolutely stunning and the statues were beautiful. It was all so amazing...

It was all absolutely perfect.

Iesha shook her head in amazement. "The painting on the wall inscriptions," she started as we all stepped into the chamber together. "It hasn't worn off yet."

"It's been hidden from the elements for all these years," Vivian said thoughtfully as she recorded.

"It's all... so beautiful," I said, lost for words.

Iesha had already turned on her flashlight. She pointed it at the left side of the entrance and let out a scoff. "Maya..."

I turned and looked in her direction.

She pointed her flashlight at the wall to a classic Ancient Egyptian image of a woman.

"I think we've found that mystery woman of his."

Darcy snapped a hundred photos of the wall as I examined it.

I stared at the image with wide eyes. The woman had black hair and a kind smile. The caption above her head said, "Pharaoh's wife," but before I could read it, I heard someone knocking on a wall.

"Doctor Maya," Aarvind called.

I turned around and looked to where he was standing at the right side of the entrance. "This wall is plaster, I'm sure there's something behind here."

"Good job, Aarvind." I said as I walked towards him.

I could read the inscriptions later.

"There are no inscriptions on this section, should I break it open?"

"Hold on," I said, looking towards Darcy. "Darcy, snap a picture first."

Once he was done, I gave Aarvind my go but only after receiving a nod from Iesha.

Aarvind pulled the sledgehammer he carried up here from his bag. Aarvind was definitely the strongest of us all, with a fit body and an outward love for the gym, so he smashed the sledgehammer into the wall and it broke through the plaster with ease.

He gave it a couple more smashes before the hole was big enough for people to crawl through.

"After you, Doctor Maya," he said.

I smiled at him, my heart still racing in excitement. After giving him a pat on the back, I crouched down and crawled through the hole with my flashlight.

"Whoa," I started. "It's really tight at first."

But once I cleared the tight spot, I found myself in another chamber. Along the walls were more inscriptions, but when I turned to my left I gasped out loud.

"What, what is it?" Iesha called. "Can we come in now?"

"This is the burial chamber!" I said, almost unable to breath. "I see the burial shrine! It's made of gold!" The gold helped the flashlight reflect a little, enough to bring more light the chamber.

If this were anything like King Tut's shrine, then it would consist of four sets of doors that would need to be opened to reveal the sarcophagus. I could see the first door clearly, sealed shut. The unbroken rope seal still wrapped around the door handles.

"He's in here... it's untouched!" I said as I rushed towards the shrine. "Bring in the cameras!"

I heard Vivian squeal from the other chamber but just as she did I hesitated.

I stopped breathing for a moment and stared at the strange object that was entwined with the seal of the shrine... I had to get close and squint to really see it, but when I did I put a hand over my mouth and felt dizzy.

"I'm coming!" Vivan shouted.

"Jeeze, Vivian, you can't fit in with the camera at the same time!" Aarvind groaned.

But though I heard them, I wasn't listening.

My hands shook a little as I reached out and touched the object that was wrapped around the seal.

"This has got to be a joke..." I whispered to myself.

I narrowed my eyes and scoffed.

It was my necklace.

The necklace my father had given me before he passed away. The one that May

lost at that part a couple years ago. It even had the little scrapes on the back of it from when I fell from my bike and scraped it on the pavement after I landed on my face when I was younger.

It was *my* necklace.

My necklace was entwined with the seal.

But that was impossible. How could that be possible?

And as I held it in my fingers, examining it and trying to convince myself that there was no way it could be mine, I remembered something.

I remembered what May told me.

That she hadn't really lost my necklace.

She'd given it away... to Akhenatem... in that other life of hers.

"Finally!" I heard Vivian say.

In a panic, I quickly pulled the necklace from the seal and stuffed it into the pockets of my cargo shorts.

I felt the sweat begin to pour down my face... this was a horrible thing... I was stealing from an Ancient Pharaoh.

But no... this was *my necklace!*

What was going on?

"Oh my god!" Vivian said, recording. "Dr. Maya is right! It's sealed!"

The others followed behind her as I shook my head. I had to forget about it right now, I would worry about this after.

"Dr. Maya," Aarvind started. "I found another plaster wall. We can look at it later but I'm certain the treasure is probably buried behind there."

"Good job, Aarvind!" I smiled at him, "we'll definitely check it out as soon as we finish here."

"Magnificent!" Iesha exclaimed as she looked at the seal. "This is absolutely stunning! The discovery of the century!"

I laughed, still sweating a little.

"Take hundreds of *good* pictures, Darcy!" Iesha said. "This image is going to be displayed in hundreds of museums around the world!"

"An unbroken seal!" Darcy gawked, continuing to take pictures. "I can literally die in peace now.

"I know!" Vivian agreed.

"I've taken like, a thousand pictures, so why don't you start opening it up?" Darcy suggested, "I'll keep taking pictures of you opening it!"

I nodded, and with Iesha's help we carefully removed the seal. This seal would definitely be displayed in museums too.

All I wished I could think of at this point was that we were about to see Akhenatem, the greatest Pharaoh in my opinion. But now, returning to the back of my mind was the face of my niece.

The face of May.

Seeing that necklace... suddenly changed everything.

She told me she gave that necklace to Akhenatem. And here it was, in his previously sealed tomb.

Suddenly... everything she said became a hundred times truer.

Originally, this entire day was supposed to be devoted solely to unearthing the secrets Akhenatem. Now, it was also about finding out what connections this all had to my niece.

Was what she was saying *really* true?

And if it was... what did this all mean for her?

How was this all going to affect her?

When we opened the first doors, I was unsurprised by another set of doors, just like what Howard Carter had witnessed when he opened King Tut's shrine.

I expected to see two more.

So we opened more doors, and opened more doors again until we finally reached the sarcophagus. I took a deep breath and with the help from Aarvind, we carefully pulled it out of the shrine.

"This is it," Iesha said. "Hello, Akheantem."

I smiled, but now it wasn't a real smile. I was unbelievably worried. So I took a deep breath and looked at Iesha. "I'm so sorry, Iesha. I need a break. Just ten minutes. This is all so overwhelming."

Iesha looked at me, surprised, but nodded. "I understand. To be honest, I think we need more air in here."

"How about we go check out the other chamber that's plastered up," Aarvind said to me. "While you do that, I'll open up this wall more so you can get more air while you open up his sarcophagus."

I nodded, "that sounds fantastic."

Iesha, left first before Aarvind started to crawl through the small hole.

"What if when we open it we can find out cause of death?" Darcy asked.

"We probably won't be able to do that right away," Vivian said. "Maybe if we take it back to Oakville—"

"I doubt that's going to happen any time soon," I said. "The Egyptians want their Pharaoh's here. These people were their Kings, their leaders. How do you think the Americans would feel if we dug up Abraham Lincoln and put him up for display in some other country?"

Vivian nodded thoughtfully. "Very good point."

I chuckled before I crawled out too.

When we were back in the antechamber, I could feel some of the fresh air coming in from the corridor. I could breathe properly again so I took a deep breath and tried to freshen up.

As Aarvind had suggested, we opened up the other plaster wall only to see that he was right. We had found his treasury.

There were hundreds and hundreds of glorious treasures in there and it was remarkable. We decided to call in the other PhD students to begin cataloguing all the artifacts before Iesha and I sat down for a bit.

"You okay?" She asked after remaining silent for a couple minutes. She was sitting right next to me and obviously not caring that her dress pants were ruined.

"I'm fine..." I said. "I just needed a moment. I'm ready to go in if you are."

"Oh god yes, am I ready."

I chuckled, and with that, Iesha, myself and my PhD students went back into the burial chamber.

Aarvind had done a good job, almost completely opening up the wall in a matter of a couple minutes. So I gave him a good pat on the back and returned to the sarcophagus.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Pharaoh," Vivian said, still recording everything.

I cracked my knuckles and took a deep breath. "Alright, let's open this up."

The lid of the sarcophagus was extremely heavy, and the fact that it was shut for thousands of years probably made it even harder to open. But with Aarvind's help and a couple loud grunts we pulled it off.

Underneath, was the first coffin.

This one was easier to remove, and after all the necessary photographs were taken, we took that lid off too.

And underneath that was the last coffin to open.

"Here we go..." Aarvind muttered.

Everyone but me were grinning, excitement overwhelming all their bodies. This was going to be the discovery of the century. To them, this was going to be one of the greatest things that ever happened to them.

How many people could say that they opened the sarcophagus of one of the greatest Pharaoh's in Egypt?

With all the work my heart was doing today, I could potentially die from exhaustion. But nonetheless, my heart raced as the last lid was pulled off.

And once it was off, we held our breath.

We all stared, silenced by what we saw.

Nothing.

The coffin was empty.

~ † ~

Despite not finding Akhenatem's body, we continued on with the excavation. We worked and worked and worked and worked all day. It was only about ten in the evening that we all decided to pause the excavation so everyone could sleep.

I headed back to the hotel with my students and Iesha where we sat in the hotel bar, trying to comprehend what had happened.

"No body," Iesha shook her head. "No body in a sealed shrine..."

"Maybe they forgot to put the body in," Darcy suggested.

"Ridiculous," Iesha responded. "The Ancient Egyptians never make mistakes like that. This was their king. One of their greatest Kings for that matter."

I sighed, "how is this possible..."

"Maybe it was robbed?" Vivian tried. "Robbed in antiquity?"

"That can't be," I said. "The tomb was sealed. The shrines were sealed. And even if that did happen, it wouldn't make sense. Why would the robbers run off with *just* his body? The shrine itself was made of gold... to a robber, one of those doors would be worth more than the body."

Everyone nodded their agreement.

"My best guess is that it's still in there. Just still hidden," Aarvind said. "The Pharaoh quite effectively hid his tomb, why should we be so surprised if he wanted his body to be hidden just as well?"

"I agree," I said. "That's the best explanation. That might also explain why we haven't found that many *things* yet." A Pharaoh as great as Akhenaten was probably buried with thousands and thousands of treasures... yet we had only found maybe half of what we expect, though that half was amazing in itself.

"He's a genius indeed," Vivian said, "the smart guy totally knew people would come after his body. But not just robbers... it's almost like he knew *we* were coming."

I looked at her and then thought of May.

Maybe it was because he knew who our modern day Egyptologists were capable of. Maybe he wanted to stay hidden.

"Anyways, I should get going," Iesha said as she stood up. "we're gonna have to be back in that tomb bright and early in the morning. Let's hope we find the body soon."

"I'm going to head out too," I said, getting up. "Goodnight, everyone. I'll see you in the morning."

With that, everyone said their goodnights and we all parted ways for the night.

When I returned to my room, I pulled my ankh necklace out of my pocket for the first time since I 'stole' it.

I sat at my bed and examined it once more, trying to make sure that it was

actually mine. I may be wrong since I hadn't seen it in so long.

But after staring at it for at least thirty minutes, I was absolutely certain.

This was absolutely, one hundred percent my necklace.

Now, the next question was, what the hell was it doing entwined with the seal of the shrine in the burial chamber of an ancient Pharaoh?

Which, might I add, was sealed shut for thousands of years?

The only possible answer that made any sense, though it still made no sense at all, was that May had given it to Akhenatem. The life she told me about... the one with me dying... it was true.

I groaned as I fell back onto my bed, but after staring at the ceiling for a little bit longer, I realized that there was no way in hell I was going to be able to sleep tonight.

So I sat up, walked over to the armoire and put the necklace on. It had been a very long time since I've worn this necklace and I had to admit, it felt nice to have it again.

But that wasn't all I was going to do.

I got into the jeep that I rented for the excavation and drove all the way down to the Valley of the Kings. Again.

It was pitch dark outside, especially when I started making my way into the desert, but despite that Egypt was always so stunning in the night. The weather was beautiful, and once you left the city, it was relatively quiet. Plus, a lot of the Egyptian monuments were lit up by artificial lights and something about that added a modern beauty to those ancient artifacts.

I really liked the nights here.

When I arrived, I parked the jeep and jumped out, smiling at the workers who were still here, most of them were police officers. There were so many people here who were absolutely devoted to protecting the Egyptian Antiquities, it was rather remarkable.

But I could understand why.

So many of their ancient treasures have been lost, and this was their history. As an Egyptologist, we wonder often that if an only relatively successful Pharaoh such as Tutankhamun was left to rest with that many treasures... then imagine what pharaohs like Ramesses II, the greatest Pharaoh of all time, may have been left behind with. Treasures galore... but all of it had been lost. Stolen before we could even see any of it.

That was also why the Egyptian government was so protective over their mummies. These people were their kings. Dead kings who had been buried and put to rest like millions of other people in this world. Unraveling their mummies, doing tests on them and putting them up for display for people to look at was just disrespectful.

Sometimes, *sometimes* I would wish they would do that, though. Allow people to see the face of the great ancient kings. But then I would remind myself of how I would feel if someone took my father's body, if he hadn't been cremated, and left it out for display.

I would be horrified, and I was certain my father would not want that.

Why do you think these mummies were covered up and sealed in those beautiful sarcophagi carved in the likeness of themselves?

That was how the Pharaoh's wanted to be remembered.

Not as shriveled old, dead mummies.

And it was our duty to respect that.

Many of these Egyptians knew that and worked hard to protect what was left of their history, and in my opinion, that was honorable.

"Dr. Devarajah," one of the two officers who were guarding Akhenatem's tomb said when I reached the tomb of Akhenatem.

Normally I asked people to call me Maya, or Dr. Maya if Maya was too personal. I liked promoting a friendly atmosphere.

But right now I had too much on my mind to remind myself to tell him that.

"How do you do," I smiled, taking a couple breaths after climbing up the cliff.

"You're back quite soon," the other, shorter one asked. His uniform had A. Ameer sewn over his heart. The other officer's said N. Malik.

"You can imagine that I couldn't sleep."

Officer Malik chuckled, "oh yes, I can imagine."

"Are you back to do more research?" Officer Ameer asked.

"Yes," I said. "I'm determined to find his body, so I want to look for clues in the tomb."

The two officers looked at each other, before looking at me. "I hope you understand that we must come in with you," Officer Ameer said.

"Oh yes, yes," I waved my hand. "I don't mind at all."

"We are not allowed to let anyone in alone after hours, you understand?" Officer Malik said with a smile. "Even if you are the lead Egyptologist of the dig. For safety."

I chuckled, "trust me, I understand. Come on, I can teach you how to read hieroglyphs."

Both the men chuckled and followed me in.

Earlier in the day we had installed temporary lights when it started to get dark, so they were very helpful now. The entire tomb was shining bright, making everything very easy to see.

After dropping my backpack at a corner of the tomb, I walked through all that we had opened so far and let out a breath. The tombs were filled with inscriptions and pictures, which would take way too long for me to read on my own.

Where could that other hidden room be?

The two walls we had broken down were much easier to find. They had no inscriptions on it, indicating that they were filled in after... but every other wall had words on it.

"I read your book," I heard Officer Malik say, suddenly.

I turned around and looked at him before I chuckled. "Did you really?"

He nodded, while his partner looked around the tomb in amazement. "An amazing read. My daughter read it and loved it too. Akhenatem easily became her favourite Pharaoh."

I let out a laugh, always happy to hear things like this.

"You know how young girls are, they love the love stories."

I nodded, "I am guilty of that too."

"You think that's the girl?" Officer Ameer asked, pointing at the wall to the left of the entrance.

"You read the book too?" Officer Malik asked.

The other officer snorted. "Me? Read?" He laughed, but then looked at me. "No offence though, Doctor."

"None taken," I said, walking over to the wall with the girl on it.

"Then how do *you* know about the girl?" Officer Malik questioned.

The shorter man rolled his eyes. "*Everyone* is talking about it. I heard about her," he looked back at me. "You think that's her?"

"It definitely is," I said. "It says Pharaoh's wife above her picture. Not Queen though, which is interesting, since there *is* evidence that she vanished before being coroneted."

"What if he had a different wife?" Officer Ameer asked.

"He didn't marry anyone else. He died without an heir too which is why his brother took the throne after him." Officer Malik answered for me.

I looked at him and chuckled, "look at you, history buff."

"Thanks to your book," he blushed a little, which I thought was sweet. Though he displayed nothing related to his parenting skill, I for whatever reason imagined he was an excellent father for that daughter of his.

"You're exactly right," I said. "He never married anyone after his first wife, so this absolutely has to be her."

"She looks beautiful," Officer Ameer said.

"She does," I added. "And you can see there are specific features to her that Akhenatem is trying to point out... the art isn't the standard woman."

"Really? You can tell that?" Officer Malik asked.

I nodded. "Look at her hair, it's exceptionally fuller. And there is a slight downward turn to her eyes. Her breasts are fuller too, and she's portrayed a little curvier than the classic image," I said. "It's clear that Akhenatem wanted to show a very specific person here."

And the more I tried to deny it... the more I realized that this *could* be May. The full hair, the downturned, kind looking eyes, the lovely curves. Those were significant features of May. If someone asked me to describe how my niece looked, those would be the words I used.

"If only I had the money to do something like this for my wife," Officer Ameer said.

I laughed at that, before getting down onto the floor and sitting cross-legged in front of the wall. There *had* to be something on this wall.

Akhenatem's story was a love story. Well, a redemption story that circled around love.

That had to mean that this wall was important, right?

It was obvious that the two men had decided to let me think, so they stepped a couple meters back and started talking quietly among themselves.

Reading hieroglyphs wasn't easy. I mean, I could do it relatively quickly, but if I wanted to make sure I made no mistakes in my interpretation, I had to be slow. In this language, one image could mean something totally different if there was a certain other image that followed behind it. Which was why I had to be careful.

But right now, I wasn't in my office with photographs, paper, a pen and coffee in front of me. So I just had to go for it.

At first I thought it would be a poem, or something of the sort. But it wasn't. As I skimmed through the formatting, it was starting to look more like a note... or a letter.

A letter to his loved one? To the woman?

No, I shook my head.

It was definitely not a letter.

And after a couple moments of staring, I realized what it was. The same word... was being repeated?

No... it wasn't the same word.

Hidden.

Concealed.

Unseen.

Invisible.

These words were repeated over and over again next to the girls' image... and they were *only* painted. The rest of the inscriptions were carved in before being painted over.

And now that I looked carefully, it was obvious that there was a carving underneath the painted image.

I stood up, "A ladder," I said. "I need a ladder!"

Officer Ameer hesitated before rushing out while I rummaged through my

backpack and pulled out a cloth. When Ameer came back a couple moments later, he had a ladder.

"Thank you," I said as I set it in front of the inscription and climbed up. Darcy had already taken a lot of photographs, so I was sure that I wouldn't get in trouble for doing this.

I wiped the cloth over the painted words. The painted words that all meant the same thing. The words, along with the brown, painted background wiped off with ease.

"Oh my God," Officer Malik said.

"Well will you look at that," Officer Ameer added.

I climbed down the ladder as I continued to wipe away the words and the background. I didn't have to wipe hard, it all almost brushed off with ease, like magic, really. But the entire time, I felt a smile grow on my face. I didn't find the body yet but I did find something else.

When I was done, I put the ladder aside and looked up at what I had done.

"Three thousand years later and they're finally together again, hmm?" Officer Malik asked.

I nodded, amazed.

Underneath the words was hidden the image of the Pharaoh himself. Pharaoh Akhenatem. Now that I had wiped away what was on top of him, he was finally no longer hidden away. Here he was, facing his wife. Finally with her again.

I smiled.

"How did it all come off so easily?" Officer Ameer asked. "Without damaging the image underneath?"

"Magic," I simply said. And though I was trying to be funny, I meant it.

How could anything else make sense?

All of this was so magical... so symbolic. And I couldn't help but think that he knew we were coming... that we were coming one day and we would be able to do this for him.

"It's sad that they weren't together in real life," Officer Ameer said.

"The Ancient Egyptian took their wall inscriptions very seriously. For them, being together in these images was significant. It meant that they would be together one day... one day in the afterlife."

"Remarkable," Officer Malik said.

I smiled, and looked at the two before looking back at the image. "This isn't the body but..." I stopped talking when I noticed something on the Pharaoh.

I blinked a couple times and then swallowed hard.

I walked over to the ladder and brought it back to the wall, and after climbing up and reaching eye level with the Pharaoh, I looked more closely at the image.

Around his neck was the ankh necklace.

My ankh necklace.

I took a deep breath before reaching out and touching the painting of his necklace, and just as my skin touched the stone that was painted yellow, I heard bodies fall onto the hard ground.

I turned around and saw both Officer Malik and Officer Ameer on the floor. "Officers?" I called as I climbed down the ladder.

But just as I got down, I saw a bright light coming from behind me.

I turned around and a gust of wind shot at me out of nowhere, pushing me back and causing me to fall hard onto my tailbone. A sharp pain from the fall rushed through me as I winced and groaned.

I was getting old and I had given birth to a baby. My body wasn't as effective as it used to be.

But when I opened my eyes, I gasped.

In between the lower half of the bodies of Akhenatem and his wife, was a new set of writing. It glowed lightly and I swallowed hard before shaking my head. "What..."

I had to go.

I had to get out of here.

Something crazy was going on.

But despite me telling myself that over and over again, I got up and walked towards the writing.

It wasn't written in hieroglyph, it was written instead in the less formal and everyday writing that the Ancient Egyptians used. A writing that was much easier to read.

And so, despite my brain telling me to get the hell out of this tomb, I stood there, right in front of the text that covered what seemed to be that other plaster entrance that we were looking for.

Magic. I said in my head. Magic kept this wall hidden.

His body was in there.

It had to be.

I reached out and touched the glowing letters and took a deep breath before I finally began to read.

To the one who finds me, the one who I am told is called an illusion. Your name is suitable, at least in the life that I have lived.

I stopped reading right there, taking many steps back and shaking my head.

"No," I said. "No. Impossible. Absolutely not."

I wanted to scream.

I was going crazy.

I shook my head vigorously and walked back, rereading the first couple words.

This was for me.

For *me*.

My name... my family identified as Hindu. I was named Maya... which, in Hinduism, meant 'illusion.'

This was a letter to me.

I felt ecstatic. But at the same time, terrified.

May was telling the truth. She was telling the truth. And somehow, I knew that with this letter, this ancient King was trying to prove to me that she was telling the truth.

So I read on...

To the one who finds me, the one who I am told is called an illusion. Your name is a suitable one, at least in the life that I have lived.

You came as an illusion to the woman I love. You asked her to aid me and for your words, I thank you. You knew nothing of me, yet you trusted me enough to give me to a woman who was like your own child. And it was that trust which gave me the second chance I needed to redeem myself.

During my short life, I have become aware of the fact that when a child is born, the gods plant a seed into their hearts. A seed that would grow with the child and one day bring to life a noble man or woman who can serve both these gods and the world honorably. Like with everyone else, the gods planted a seed into my cold heart too.

I gave it no water, no warmth, no sunshine, no love. I only gave it pain, and hatred and anger. As you can imagine, it did not grow. It never grew. It simply slept quietly in my stone heart.

But then you gave her to me.

Somehow, it was the water from her tears, the warmth of her embrace, the brightness of her smile and the love from her own heart that caused my seed to grow and blossom into what it was meant to become.

My heart is the heart of a Pharaoh. It needs to grow much more than that of a regular being. Yet she had the strength to not only bring me to the level of people like her... she also had the strength to push me well past that.

She helped me blossom into a respectable Pharaoh who gave up everything. She is a remarkable woman... stronger than anyone I know. Stronger than me.

Her name, like yours, is well picked.

May.

Named after the time in your lands where all sorts of plants and flowers begin to blossom, allowing them to shine during a glorious summer after a cold, harsh winter.

A well-suited name for her indeed.

When I say her name I feel only happiness and love. Time cannot change that. Which is why I will sleep for thousands of years in wait to be with her again.

My name is Akhenatem. I was the Mighty Bull of the two Ladies. Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt. Son of Ra.

Now, in my passing, I relinquish all of my titles and leave only my name.

To you, the woman called Illusion, I entrust my flesh and bones. My body. Behind this door you will find it, and once this door is open my spirit will finally walk out of this tomb and be reborn into the new life it was destined to live.

I thank you once more, and ask that you do what you believe is right when it comes to keeping my love happy.

I was crying. As I read I did not realize I was crying, but when I finished it, I felt the tears rolling down my cheek.

"Oh May," I whispered to myself. "Oh, my dear, dear May."

How she must have suffered all these years... how could she not tell me sooner?

The poor girl. *My* poor girl.

His words... his words were enough to show me that this was true love. He *loved* her. He loved her so much. And there was no way that she did not reciprocate his love. Knowing her, she must have loved him even more. Her heart was bigger than most peoples. There was just so much more room for love in there.

I wiped away my tears and pulled out my phone, snapping a picture of the words that were still glowing slightly.

I would read this to her... she needed to hear this. I would read this to her and hug her and kiss her and tell her that everything was going to be all right.

He may be gone... but his love was real. It was *very* real.

After taking the picture, I touched the wall once more, wondering how the hell I was going to get behind there.

My heart refused to break this wall down. These were his words. The Pharaoh's words. No... his heart. I couldn't destroy what was left of him. I guess I would have to wait for tomorrow. We would have to bring in a team to carefully remove the plaster without ruining it.

So I wiped away my tears and turned around. I had no idea what happened to the officers, but I may need to call an ambulance.

However, just when I thought it was all over, I saw lights glowing from behind me again.

I turned around quickly once more, only to see that the plaster entrance with the words on it had vanished, opening up the entrance to that other room.

Where his body was.

I let out a breath. I guess he wanted me to find his body right now.

So I pulled out my flashlight and pointed it into the room since there were no lights in there yet. I had to be careful.

If his sarcophagus was outside, then he may be in here without it... and the sarcophagus does help protect the body. So him being in there without a sarcophagus could mean he was decomposing more than your average mummy. And breathing that air in could not be healthy.

But there wasn't much I could see from where I was standing.

So I looked just for a second longer... but that second was long enough for me to notice something.

I pointed the flashlight back at the wall right in front of me. "Pyramid Texts..." I said to myself as I gawked.

Pyramid texts? Spells that were carved into the walls of Pyramids to help and protect the Pharaoh.

But... Pyramid texts?

In a New Kingdom rock cut tomb?

Without thinking, I walked right in, shining the flashlight as I looked all the way up. The ceiling was high. Higher than the rest of the tomb... and it was filled with *Pyramid* texts.

But not just *any* Pyramid texts.

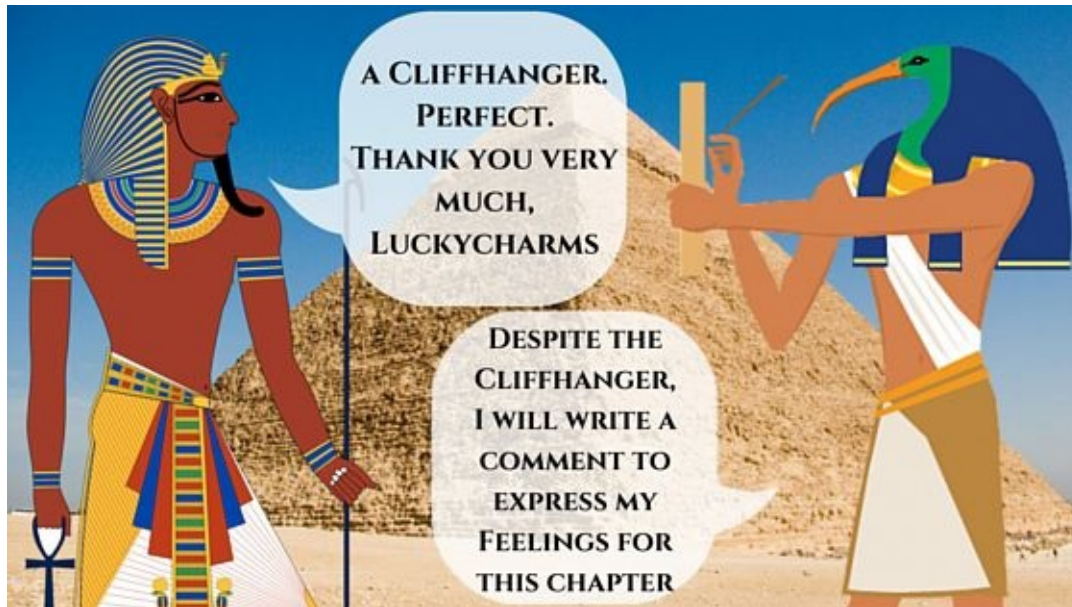
Resurrection spells.

As I turned to my left I looked at the walls and saw hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of resurrection spells.

And when I finally reached 270 degrees in my turn, facing the right side of the entrance, I dropped my flashlight in shock.

I found him.

I found the body of Akhenaten.



Chapter 51 - [The Resurrection]

HEY ALL!

I was so SO SO SO SO happy with all the comments and votes in the last chapter that I wanted to put up the next chapter up early for you all!!! It's a short chapter, but an important one! =D

Please comment and vote just like last time to let me know what you think!! Also, don't forget to Follow me if you're enjoying the story!! =D

THANK YOU!

Luckycharms <3



I did not need to pick my flashlight back up because the body had a strange glowing mist covering it. A mist that was glowing a strange but beautiful blueish white colour. I was afraid to go to it, but after standing there for a short while, gawking at what I saw, I took a couple steps towards it.

It was in no way the kind of body I expected to see.

It was no mummy. There were no bandages. There wasn't even a sarcophagus for crying out loud.

Instead... there was a bed made of stone and on top of it was a mattress.

And on top of the mattress was a man.

I swallowed hard, stepping closer only to see a remarkably handsome man with his eyes shut in sleep. He had chiseled features and a strong looking body, and in his sleep he looked peaceful.

He had his hands crossed over his chest, as a mummy would, with his whip in one hand and the flail in another. He was also wearing the shendyt of a Pharaoh as well as a lot of gorgeous jewelry.

He was just lying there.

Not moving.

Not even breathing.

I stood there, not knowing what to do.

So I rushed back to where I was standing before and grabbed the flashlight. I pointed it at the walls and started to try and figure out what on earth was happening here.

This man was Akhenatem... sealed shut in this tomb for thousands of years, but not dead. He wasn't dead... or at least he didn't look dead. No, I was *sure* he

wasn't dead.

He looked too pretty to be dead.

I didn't know what was going on but my best guess was that he was given the chance to be reunited with May... and what Akhenatem said in his note... about handing his flesh and bones to me and doing what was right to make May happy?

Well, I think he was referring to the fact that *I* had to figure out how to wake him up, bring him out of this tomb and back to May.

I stood there and read the hieroglyphs to the best of my capability trying to figure out what I had to do. But from what I read, there was nothing. These were classic resurrection spells, spells I studied while getting my Masters in Egyptology... nothing unique to the current situation I was dealing with.

But I kept reading.

I kept reading for what felt like hours and *nothing* popped up. To make matters worse, I was running out of time. By six in the morning, people would start making their way back to the excavation site.

And who knows when those officers would wake up!

I groaned and turned my head to look back at the body. Maybe there would be clue there.

On the wall behind the body was a large image of a scarab beetle with its wings stretched out. Like the area around the body, it was glowing too. The scarab beetle was a symbol of resurrection in Egypt... symbolizing the rising sun, Khepri.

Okay, great.

Akhenatem had all the resurrection stuff surrounding him. Perfect. So why wasn't he being resurrected?

Why wasn't he coming back to *life*?

And as I thought and thought and thought... it finally hit me.

Life.

Life!

He had all the resurrection rituals... now he just needed the push to be brought back to life.

And the symbol for *life* in Ancient Egypt was the Ankh.

My ankh necklace... it *had* to be the key. Was that why it was entwined with the seal of his tomb? Maybe it wasn't there because he wanted to return it to me? maybe it was there because he wanted me to have it to bring him back?

I took a deep breath, rushing towards the body while removing the Ankh necklace from around my neck. It wouldn't hurt to try, right?

So carefully, I put the necklace around his neck, shutting the clasp and setting the ankh right over where his heart would be.

Right when the pendant touched his skin, I gasped as the glowing Khepri image burst out from the wall. It flapped its wings, creating a gust of wind so strong that I fell backward. When I opened my eyes again I watched in absolute amazement as it flew around the room, lighting it up to the point that it seemed as if the sun itself was in here.

As it flew, sparkling light fell from it, touching the walls and causing all the carved letters to glow the same colour as the beetle. There was a screeching noise, and I covered my ears after standing up.

Finally, once all the carvings were glowing, it flapped its wings once more before flying back to Akhenatem's body.

The scarab beetle landed on top of him, covering his entire torso, and just when I thought the show was over, another spectacle of lights filled the room. The beetle began to emit multiple flashing rays of light as it shrunk to just about the size of a heart.

After flapping its wings once more, it turned into a ball of white light, sinking

into the chest of Akhenatem.

And then the entire room darkened completely.

I stood there for some time, refusing to breath. After a couple moments passed, I swallowed back my nervousness and took my first step forward.

I walked back to the body, holding my breath for just a bit longer. When I reached it, I saw that his chest was moving now. Up and down. Slowly, but surely.

His heart was beating.

And in the silence of the Egyptian night, I could even hear it. It was a soft sound, but it sounded strong. He had a strong heart.

I took another breath, "Akhenatem?" I called softly.

His eyes opened slowly, his lips parting as he took a soft breath. When he looked at me, I nearly cried.

It felt like a dream.

All of this was so unreal.

Here he was, a Pharaoh of Egypt, lying here in front of me. And he was not *just* any Pharaoh of Egypt, he was *the* Pharaoh of Egypt who I had been studying for years now.

Suddenly, he lifted his body up, sitting upright. He put a hand on his head and shut his eyes. He didn't say anything for some time but just sat there, rubbing his head.

When he finally looked back at me, he spoke with a weak, deep voice. "May," he said. "Is she alright?"

I smiled, feeling my lip quiver as I held back my tears. "She's fine," I said. "But she's going to be much better very soon."

~ † ~



Chapter 52 - [Beauty and All That Was His]

Aunty Maya was famous. She was all over the news for her discovery, though they hadn't gone into much detail aside from the fact that, like Doctor Devarajah had suspected, the tomb had remained completely untouched.

I tried to stay away from the news channels and all those sort of things. I knew that actually hearing about what was going on might potential help me move on... I just couldn't do it.

I would find another way to move on properly.

But while she was making the discovery of a lifetime, I still had to deal with my mundane life.

The day after she opened to tomb, I spent a full day at work. I stayed in a little late to do some extra photocopying and then drove home. I was a little happy today... Aubrey had come to tell me that my advice had worked. Her boyfriend had agreed with what she said and things had worked perfectly fine for her.

That made me very happy. I wanted my students to be happy, after all.

When I got home, Neferkitti greeted me with more enthusiasm than usual. "Hey pretty lady," I grinned at her.

She meowed and meowed and rubbed against me, practically pushing me.

I chuckled, just thinking that she was more excited than usual but went on with my business. After filling her cat bowl, I went straight to the bathroom to take a nice, warm shower.

My uncle, Kiya and I were hanging out today... I'm assuming it was because he

wanted to talk about all the crazy things I had told my aunty and Ro. But I wasn't too worried. I was just glad that I got some time to hang out with him. I missed him a lot, especially since I barely saw him these days.

After taking a shower, I walked out, dried my hair and my body and got into a comfortable dress. Once I was ready, I gave Uncle Ethan a call and headed and made my way to the door.

Neferkitti chased after me. She started to push her head against my legs again and meow.

"What is it, hun?" I asked, confused.

She refused to let me go.

She ran around my legs, almost tripping me.

"C'mon, Neferkitti, I'm going to be late!" I continued walking past her and once I opened the door, she dashed out as fast as she could.

I gasped, "Neferkitti!"

She ran all the way to the doors of the stairwell, scraping her claws against it.

I hesitated, but then locked the door of my apartment and followed her. "Do you want me to follow you?" I asked.

She meowed, continue to scratch the door.

When I opened it, she rushed into the stairwell and started to run up the stairs.

I followed behind her, and every time she was too far away, she waited for me to catch up.

We climbed and climbed until I felt exhausted. "Jeez Neferkitti, couldn't we have taken the elevator?"

Neferkitti ignored me and continued on her merry way.

I sighed, but followed her.

After what felt like forever and a heart attack, I was practically wheezing when we finally reached the very top floor.

Neferkitti sat at the door, scraping against it as she waited for me.

We were at the top floor. The top five floors of this building were filled with storage rooms. It was kind of like a garage. A small garage that tenants used to store extra stuff. Mine was at the very last floor and I used this storage room to store my Christmas Tree but that was about it.

Why was she bringing me here?

When I opened the door for her, she rushed in, stopping *exactly* where the door to my unit was. How she knew that, I had no idea. But I had already established that she was a magical cat, so I simply followed her.

When I got to the storage unit door, I unlocked it and pushed it open. As the door opened, the automatic lights flashed on, blinking a couple times before buzzing to life.

My heart stopped.

Neferkitti charged into the room in excitement as my mind went blank.

There was supposed to be just a Christmas tree in here, but there wasn't *just* a Christmas tree.

There was a lot more.

And I stared at it all in shock.

The room was a horrible mess, with tons and tons of things just thrown around. Kindergarten workbooks, photos, clothes, books, gifts, a sword and my bicycle. And those were only some of the stuff.

My legs turned into jelly, which subsequently caused me to collapse onto my knees. It hurting since the floor was hard and tiled but that was the last thing on my mind.

This *had* to have been a joke.

Was the wizard still alive? Was he messing with me? I knew for a fact that none of this stuff was there before. I had come up here every December for the last four years to get the Christmas tree and it was empty.

Where was this all coming from?

How was this possible?

Neferkitti was dragging a plastic bag towards me as I stared in shock, and when she reached me, she released the bag and charged back into the mess to hunt for more things.

After remaining frozen for a couple more moments, I couldn't hold back my curiosity. I needed answers. What did all this mean?

I quickly unknotted the bag and when I opened it up I let out a breath. This was the plastic bag that I had kept under the bathroom sink for nearly a year.

In it, were all of Atem's Egypt stuff... the stuff he was wearing when I first met him.

I pulled out the bag's contents one by one, examining them. Most of it was gold, gold bracelets, gold armbands, gold belt, gold everything. His blue and gold Nemes headdress was also in here, as was his kilt.

I let out a breath before trying to swallow back the lump in my throat. I held the headdress up, remembering how he looked in it. It had been so long since I had seen him but I could remember him so clearly. From what I could remember, he looked so handsome in all of this, he looked strong and so masculine. The fact that he was shirtless made it so easy to see his broad shoulders and well-defined muscles. He always, truly looked like a king, though now that I thought about it, back then I was scared and thought he was crazy.

Neferkitti wasted no time; she was dragging the next item towards me as I put the headdress back into the plastic bag. It was a notebook.

It took me a moment to recognize it, but after a short moment of staring at it I finally remembered. It was that gorgeous notebook I bought him to practice his writing in. I had the exact same one and I told him to use it like a diary.

I opened it up and flipped through it, realizing that this was exactly his writing. His writing was always neat... neat and slightly slanted. The first couple pages started off with simple things that made me smile through the tears that were forming in my eyes. He wrote his abc's a couple times as practice, followed by filling pages with random words. A couple pages in, however, was when he actually started to do as I said.

As I had started my dairy entries with "Dear Aunty Maya," he had started his with "*My Dearest Father.*"

His first entry was short. All it said was "*May has told me to practice my writing by writing letters to you. I believe this is silly. However, as she writes quite well herself, maybe I should give it a try. – Your son, Akhenatem.*"

The next couple pages were filled with more random words, but a couple pages in I found another letter.

My dear father,

I am thoroughly mesmerized by the colours in the trees of this land. May calls it AUTUMN or FALL. I believe fall is the more appropriate name, since the leaves do fall from the trees. Today I looked outside and saw red, yellow and orange. And brown. And still some green. The colours look beautiful together. However, when I look at the floor, it looks hideous. Once they fall to the ground the peasants step all over them and cause them to turn into mush. It is saddening, but there is not much I can do about it.

-Your son,

Akhenatem

*[May has said to me that I must
sign my name at this side for it
to be in letter format.]*

I let out a short laugh, remembering this. I flipped the page, only to see more random words and phrases. After reading the words written on the page, I realized that there was a theme. These were words from different books. The words on this page corresponded probably with *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. There were some last words mentioned in the book that I recognized, which Atem had written down. I never knew he did this, but maybe they were words and phrases that he didn't really understand.

The next entry was from another day I remembered.

Father,

It has snowed here. It is more beautiful than I ever imagined. I wish that you could have seen such a beautiful sight in your lifetime. The beauty of the snow makes the cold a little more bearable. I do not think you would have liked the cold. May seems completely accustomed to it. She has told me of a religious tradition which is called Christmas. Everyone is decorating everything. Even trees. I admit that it is quite beautiful, though I do not understand the purpose of the trees.

-Akhenatem

This time, the next page had another entry.

Dear Father (and maybe Mother too),

I have purchased a bicycle for May for Christmas. It is a strange machine used for traveling in her world. It is structured like a horse but has wheels like a chariot.

She better like it.

-Akhenatem

After I read that I felt the tears escape, I looked up at the bicycle, which just sat there, unused for four years. Getting that as a gift from him was one of the greatest things ever. I was so happy.

Right then, I felt my phone vibrate.

I pulled it out from my purse and saw that it was a text from Uncle Ethan.

May, where are you? I'm in my car downstairs.

I texted him back quickly, asking him to come upstairs to the storage room. He responded by asking me if I was okay. When I said I needed him to hurry, he responded by saying he was coming up now.

After I put aside my phone, I flipped quickly through the book, deciding to read it word for word that night. But as I flipped through I noticed a photo slip down from one in the book.

I turned the page back to where the photo was and when I picked it up and examined it, I gasped. I recognized the photo immediately. It was me, as a child, grinning a huge grin. This was one of my most favourite photos from my childhood. Not only was it adorable, but it was from a time when my dad and I got along well.

Though it was so long ago, I remember the photo being taken. My father was the one who took the photo and after snapping it, he scooped me up into his arms and told me that I had the world's most beautiful smile.

After kissing me on my cheek he made me promise that I would always smile like that no matter what happened.

I was crying now, bawling.

This memory was so long ago that I forgot that there was ever even a time that my dad treated me so well.

Why did Atem even have this picture?

I looked down at the page that I found the photo on and through the tears and sobs and hiccups I read what he wrote there.

Father and Mother,

I find that I am falling in love with May. I believe this is unacceptable but I do not know what to do.

Please, somehow, tell me what to do.

And I wish she would smile more like she smiles in this photo. I wonder now if I am part of the reason for why she no longer smiles like this.

-Akhenatem

My heart skipped a beat, and somehow his words made me force myself to stop the tears. I closed the book and hugged it tightly before using one of my arms to wipe my tears away.

"May," I suddenly heard Uncle Ethan call.

When I turned around, I saw him kneel down next to me. He had Kiya in his arms, who he put down on the floor before putting an arm on my shoulder.

"What's wrong, May?"

Kiya reached out and touched my wet cheeks. "May?"

I smiled at her before looking at Uncle Ethan.

He was looking at all the stuff before his eyes returned to me. "What is all of this?"

"All the stuff... from that other life."

His eyebrows rose in shock.

I reached out and pulled the plastic bag closer to him, letting him grab it and look through the stuff in amazement. He pulled the jewelry out one by one and left the headdress for last. When he was done with the examination, he looked at me. "Absolutely amazing," he said.

Kiya let go of my face before running off to rummage through the things and Neferkitti joined her.

Uncle Ethan crossed his legs before sitting down beside me. "When did all of this—"

"I don't know," I said. "Neferkitti just went crazy today and led me up here. It wasn't all here when I brought the Christmas tree back up in January." It was March now, so at some point in the last three months, all of this stuff appeared in here.

"Can you explain it all?"

I pointed at the bike. "Atem got me that for Christmas," I said. "Those small statues and books about Egypt? I got him those. The pile of clothes right there are all the winter gear I got him. And the Victoria Secret bag over there... there're pajamas in there, which he got me for my birthday. And all those books over there are books we read together."

"And the sword?"

"His," I said. "He pointed that at my neck on the day I met him."

"Look!" Kiya yelled as she ran back towards me. She slumped down onto my lap, holding a photo frame in her hands. My breathing hastened as I looked at the photo from Atem's birthday.

It was a picture of him and I.

I was grinning and he had his usual neutral expression... though something about it showed happiness. I liked this picture a lot, so I had it printed and framed back when he was here.

Her small chubby fingers pointed at my smiling face in the photograph. "May!" she said, happily.

Then she pointed at Atem before looking at me with her big eyes. "Who this?" She asked.

Uncle Ethan looked at the photo too, his eyes slowly widening even before I spoke.

"That's Atem," I said as I held back my tears and looked at the photo.

"Atem!" She said, copying me. Except she said Atem's name the right way. Ah-tem. Not A-tem.

Uncle Ethan reached out and gave me a tight hug.

"I don't understand," I whispered. "Why *now*?" Why now that I was trying to get over him?

"I wish I could give you some answers, May," he said, softly. "All of this is baffling me too. But is there any of this stuff you want to take downstairs? I can help you move some of it."

When he pulled away I smiled at him and nodded. "The bike... I'll get the books and photos."

"Right," he said. "Let's go downstairs and sit somewhere more comfortable and talk, alright?"

I nodded and let him help me up.

He walked over to the bike and lifted it up before turning to Kiya. "Come on, sweetheart," he said to the little girl who was standing in the middle of the room in a cute pink dress while looking around. She still held the photo in both her hands and looked at her dad when he called her but then back at the photo. After a moment, I saw her run after her father.

I walked over to one of the messy piles of clothes, his notebook still in my arms, and knelt down beside it. It was a pile of some of the many clothes Atem had worn over the year. I picked up one of the shirts and let out a breath. It was a white t-shirt that fit him perfectly... I remember liking it when he wore this one.

As I lifted it up and stretched it out to look at it properly, his scent from the shirt filled my nose. It was strange how so many years could pass and it still smelled like him. I loved his smell, and as I held it closer to my face, it got stronger.

My entire body suddenly ached in want for him. I missed him so much. I wanted so badly to hold him and kiss him but I knew it was impossible. So I put the shirt back down on the top of the pile and stood up.

I grabbed some more books and photos and left the room, walking pretty fast. I felt the need to get out of there since I felt that the longer I stayed there the harder it was going to be for me to move on.

~ † ~

When we got back to my apartment, I sorted through the things quietly with Uncle Ethan's help. He looked kind of preoccupied on his phone and I figured it was because he was texting Aunt Maya, who was still busy in Egypt.

He must have been updating her with what had happened here. "May," Uncle Ethan called suddenly.

I looked up from the book I was flipping through. *The Little Prince*.

"Aunt Maya wants to talk to you. On Facetime. Are you okay with talking to her now?"

I nodded. To be honest, I feel like speaking to her would help me feel a lot better. "Let me get my laptop," I said as I walked from the living room and to my bedroom. When I returned, I had my laptop in my hands and I set it down on the coffee table. As soon as I opened it, I was already getting the call from Aunt Maya.

When I pressed the answer button, I was greeted by her warm smile. "Hey, princess!"

"Mama!" I heard Kiya squeal as she began to run towards us, but Uncle Ethan lifted her into his arms before she could get too far.

"Let's let May talk to mama first, okay?"

Kiya nodded, not arguing at all.

"Hey Aunt Maya, how's the dig going?"

"Excellent," she smiled. "I've found everything I've needed to find. But... I just wish—"

I knew what she was going to say, so I cut her off. "Don't feel bad for following your dreams, Aunt Maya. I'm so happy for you. Don't worry about me."

She smiled, and I could see the exhaustion in her eyes. "I love you, sweetheart."

"I love you too," I blew her a kiss, trying to show that I was fine.

She let out a sigh before continuing. "Your uncle has been keeping me updated... apparently the stuff from that other time are back?"

I nodded.

She hesitated. "If you don't mind, may I see a picture?"

I nodded again before picking up the picture frame with the photo that Kiya found. Holding it in front of the camera, I pointed at Atem. "That's him."

Her eyes widened and then she relaxed again. "Wow," she started. "He's *very* handsome."

"He is," I said, turning the photo around and looking at it myself. "He was proud about that too."

She laughed then rolled her eyes. "Men, right?"

"Yeah," I giggled.

"Anyways, May, I was going to save this for you for when I get home... but after your Uncle told me what was going on, I thought that it would be better for me to just tell you now."

"Is it about the dig?"

She nodded. "I think... whatever force is out there controlling all of this... I think what they want for you is to finally get a chance to accept all of this for as it is—"

"Accept that he's never coming back," I said.

"Well... that's not exactly what I meant. I meant..." she tried to find the right words but couldn't.

"Don't worry about it, Auntie Maya," I smiled reassuringly. "So what is it that you wanted to tell me?"

She hesitated and before she spoke she gave me the warmest of smiles she could conjure up... and for some reason, I knew she had to say something that may upset me. "I believe you, May," she said. "Without a doubt I believe everything you said to me about this other life. During the excavation... it kind of seemed like Akhenatem was trying to help me believe you completely."

"Really?"

She nodded. "And I found something," she started. "In his tomb... it was kind of a note. It was a note written to me... and I know this because he specifically refers to my name as having the meaning of 'illusion.' I'm assuming you told him that?"

I nodded, feeling that lump return in my throat. I couldn't believe he remembered that.

Anyhow, it's a note written to me, but it's about you."

My heart started to race right before I held my breath.

"Would you like me to read it to you?"

I hesitated, trying to think that through. *Did* I want her to read it to me? But I knew within seconds that there was no point in me trying to think that through. Of course I wanted to know what he said. There was no doubt about that. "Yes," I said, firmly.

Aunty Maya smiled before pulling a piece of paper out in front of her. She took a breath before starting to read. As she read, I couldn't hold back the tears. Uncle Ethan, who was standing in the kitchen with Kiya, was watching me carefully and when he saw the tears escape he walked over to me.

I tried to be strong and not cry in an attempt to prove to Aunty Maya and Uncle Ethan that I was fine... but it almost felt like these were his last words. And his last words were to me.

When she finished reading it, she looked at me.

"I never knew he could be so poetic," I said, letting out a chuckle.

Uncle Ethan put an arm around me. "Well, in his last couple years he must have spent a lot of time with his more poetic brother. It must have rubbed off onto him."

I laughed through my tears and let Uncle Ethan kiss my head.

"He really loved you, May. And he left the responsibility of keeping you happy in my hands," Aunty Maya said.

I nodded.

Aunty Maya then let out a breath. "You're such a magical person..." she suddenly said. "To think that all along, *you* were the one who saved him. May, you're truly amazing."

That made me happy, "thanks, Aunty Maya."

"There's one more thing... May," she continued. "There's one more thing he asked me to tell you."

I waited for her to continue.

"He asked me to tell you to remember the promise. He said not to cry."

I nodded, "yeah."

She blew me a kiss, "I'll be home soon, sweetheart. Until then, keep smiling. I'm working on making things right here... and you'll be happy soon, I promise."

I nodded once more, though I didn't really get what she meant by 'making things right,' and started to move the laptop towards Uncle Ethan and Kiya. "Kiya wants to say hi," I said. "She's been waiting so patiently."

Kiya grinned proudly before looking at her mom, "Mama!" She squealed.

"Hey little baby!" Aunty Maya squealed back.

I chuckled, before getting up and walking to my room. I could feel Uncle Ethan's worried glance but I decided to just let myself keep walking and close my bedroom door behind me.

I wasn't crying anymore, just feeling a little hopeless.

The book of his that I was reading earlier was sitting on my bed, untouched since I brought it down, but now I felt the need to finish reading it.

So I picked it up and sat in my room and read it all.

Most of the beginning was just rambling and reflections on things that happened here. They were, for the most part short comments on things in this world.

But after that one page with my picture, there were more serious notes. He wrote clear letters to his parents, obviously wanting some guidance, and I couldn't help but smile as I read them.

Dearest Mother and Father,

I cannot believe how soft hearted I have grown. If you had only heard how she spoke to me today... a year ago I would have had her blood on my hands within a matter of moments.

Every time she yells at me, I feel anger, but at the same time I don't. It is more so an annoyance now. Not rage. She annoys me. A lot. Yet I must also admit that I find myself forgetting that I am upset with her very quickly.

She is driving my crazy... which confuses me more since I feel an attraction to her.

I am still waiting for you to give me some guidance. How long will it take for you to send me some sort of sign?

Your foolish son,

- Akhenatem

I chuckled out loud as I read this one. Oh god did I know how much I annoyed him. I flipped the page, and read on.

Mother and Father,

You have failed to send me a sign but I will assume that it is because this world has no magic in it... unless however the sign that you sent me was that dream of her telling me that she 'liked' me again. Well, if that was the sign then... very humorous indeed. How thoughtful of you, making me more confused than ever.

But again, if that was your sign and if you are telling me to go ahead with this silly infatuation then fine, maybe you will be pleased with what I have to say

next.

I kissed her.

Goodbye,

-Akhenatem

My smile grew, remembering that day. It was an important day for me and I remember being thrilled afterwards. Reading his words made my heart feel a little giddy. Giddy and happy.

Dearest Ra,

I am directing my letters to you as my mother and father refuse to grant me with any reasonable advice.

I am going crazy.

I have no one here to guide me aside from Blake, yet I do not have it in me to tell him anything. I am a Pharaoh. SHE IS A PEASANT.

Maybe she is not a peasant.

Why do I feel this way for her? She is annoying. Very, very annoying.

PLEASE send me some guidance, dear Lord.

Your loving descendant,

-Akhenatem

The next one was written right underneath the one before... and by the looks of things, he was starting to sound desperate, which made me chuckle.

Dear Khamenatem,

No one is helping me. And I have given up on trying to seek help.

In this world, the heart is an organ, which simply pumps blood. The brain is where one feels emotion.

Ridiculous, don't you agree?

How, with their 'technology' and their 'advances' could they believe in such a foolish thing? We feel in our hearts. Not our brains. Our hearts are what are weighed during judgment, not our brains. What foolishness.

May has a strange family. They care greatly about their image... so much that they care not about how the people within the family feel. It's destructive.

May's father is the worst. He is a serious piece of work... I think there is really something wrong with him. He is the strangest man I have ever met. You would not believe it unless you see it yourself but in his eyes, all I see is love for his daughter. He loves her. But every time he speaks, all that comes out of his mouth are hateful, angry words. It's the strangest thing ever.

Her grandfather however... well he is just an asshole, as May would say. I don't like him at all, and I think I made sure he knew it.

Like I said before, I have given up on trying to explain what I feel. I have come to understand that I love her. May, that is. I think I really accepted it when I saw her family... how poorly some of them treat her, like how some people in our family treated us... yet she still smiles. She is the kindest girl I have ever met despite the fact that she annoys the living daylight out of me. She looks at the world in a way that I wish I had looked when life was difficult for us. I

understand that it is too late now, but realizing this strength of hers has made me unembarrassed about this love I feel for her.

She is a special girl, and I wish you could have met her. You would also found her to be beautiful. She has nice hair and happy eyes.

It is easier to write these letters to you, brother. I think I will continue to write to you.

-Akhenatem

I smiled before lifting the book to my lips and kissing it. I was about to flip the page again when Uncle Ethan knocked on the door. "May?"

"Yeah, come in."

He opened the door and smiled at me. "You okay, Princess?"

I nodded. "Fine," I smiled, closing the book and handing it to him when he sat next to me on my bed.

"What's this?"

"I bought it for him and told him to write in it like a diary, to practice writing."

He flipped through it and I saw him smile. "Writing letters to the dead was a thing in Ancient Egypt, you know?"

"Really?" I asked.

He nodded. "He must have really expected a response."

"He got frustrated when no one responded," I chuckled to myself.

He smiled and then after a moment of staying silent, he nudged me. "May—"

"I'm fine, Uncle Ethan," I said. "I swear, I am."

After watching me intently for a moment, he sighed. "Good," he said. "I'm glad."

I leaned over and kissed his cheek. "Thanks for looking out for me, Uncle Ethan. I'm sure I'll be completely better soon. I'll figure it all out, I'm sure I will."

He messed up my hair a little before giving me his warm smile. "I know you will," he said. "You're a strong young woman."

I grinned at him, making him smile.

"That's the smile I like to see," he said. "I'll make you something to eat and we'll watch a movie? Kiya has wanted to watch Mulan since she saw that doll at the Disney Store."

I nodded. "Sounds good."

So I spent the rest of the day hanging out with Uncle Ethan, Neferkitti and Kiya. I had fun and surprisingly I did feel a lot better despite all that had happened.

I slept pretty well that night, practically hugging Atem's notebook and when I woke up, I took a shower and wanted to start the day off well.

I made myself a nice, filling breakfast and ate it alone on the island of the kitchen, reading a book while I ate, but just as I was finishing up my eggs, I heard a knock at my door.

Thinking it was Uncle Ethan, I rushed over to the door, but when I opened it, I was pleasantly surprised to see Blake. "Hey, lovely," he smiled warmly.

"Well, look who decided to drop by after so long," I smirked.

He rolled his eyes jokingly. "I was here last week."

I let out a laugh as I let him in. Even after all these years, Blake and I were still really close. He came to visit often, though I did think part of the reason was still for my brother, who was living in a different city. "What's up?" I asked.

"Want me to be honest?"

"Of course."

"Well, your brother's been extremely worried about you recently... apparently you've been upset about something?"

I rolled my eyes. "Trust me, Blake, I'm fine," I said, walking back to the kitchen. "Want anything to eat?"

"No thanks, May," he said, sitting at the chair in front of the island. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure," I said. "I just had a stressful week."

He let out a breath. "May..."

Despite him saying he didn't want anything, I poured him a glass of chocolate milk.

When I turned around his eyes widened. "May, are you okay?"

I felt my head start to ache as I rolled my eyes. "Yes, Blake. *Trust* me."

He stood up quickly. "No," he started. "Your nose is bleeding."

My eyes widened as I looked down, seeing a ton of red stains on my white shirt.

He reached out and pinched the bridge of my nose with one hand as he ripped a paper towel from the roll in his other. Then he held the paper towel at my nose.

When I took the paper towel for him, I dabbed my nose with it in surprise. "That's weird."

He walked around the island. "Have you been sleeping well?"

"Yeah..."

"You're clearly not taking care of yourself May," he scolded.

I rolled my eyes again. "Blake—"

He grabbed my hand and led me to the washroom. "You're going to ruin your shirt," he said when we reached the sink. "Press hard, May."

I nodded, leaning over the sink, but couldn't deny that I was starting to feel faint. "Blake, I think I'm going to faint," I said, suddenly worried.

"I've got you," he said as he held onto my arms from behind me. "Let's get the bleeding to stop."

I silently continued to dab the blood from my nose as Blake watched me.

"So you were saying? You're fine, huh?"

I was going to roll my eyes again but as I opened my mouth to argue, I felt the taste of blood on my tongue.

And suddenly I felt sick. "I think you should step outside for a second," I said.

"Why?"

And before I could explain myself, I dashed towards the toilet and puked.

"*May!*" Blake gawked as he grabbed a hold of my hair and pulled it away from my face, letting me puke.

~ † ~

Surprisingly or unsurprisingly, I found myself sitting in Blake's car, driving towards the hospital. We picked up Ro too because Blake wanted a girl to be there because apparently "girls know what's going on with other girls more than boys do." I tried to protest, but neither of them would take it.

Once we got to the hospital, we waited for a *long* time and when I was finally in the nurses did a bunch of tests. Apparently having a headache, a nosebleed, dizziness and puking all at the same time was weird.

Okay fine... it was a little weird.

I was sitting on the examination table while Ro sat across from me in a chair. She was anxiously shaking her leg and had her arms crossed, not looking too

pleased.

When the middle aged male doctor with blonde hair walked in, he looked at me with a smile. "Miss. Khan," he said.

"Hi."

"So, I've looked through the test results and your blood test results will be sent to your family doctor once they're in."

I nodded.

"I'd like to ask you a couple questions first," he said.

"Sure."

"Aside from the headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness and nosebleeds, how are you feeling today?"

Ro rolled her eyes at the question.

"Fine, I guess. I was perfectly fine before it all happened."

He nodded, checking something off of his clipboard. "And are you on any antibiotics or any medications for infections?"

"Nope."

"Have you travelled outside the country within the last eight weeks?"

"No."

"Have you ever been in Africa?"

I hesitated. "Yeah," I said, making Ro arch an eyebrow. I had updated her completely with everything that had happened up till now, so I assumed she just still found it hard to believe.

"When, Miss. Khan?"

"Four years ago."

"Have you had any sexual contact with anyone who was born or lived in Africa?"

"Yeah, four years ago." Atem was born in Africa and he lived there. Even if it was thousands of years ago.

Now both of Ro's eyebrows were raised.

I know these questions about Africa had to do with HIV/AIDS. And I knew for a fact that I didn't have either HIV or AIDS, but now the doctor might be suspicious of that.

"Well, I can assure you that you don't have either HIV or AIDS, but I'm sure you understand that these questions are mandatory."

I nodded. "Yeah, I understand."

"When was the last time you had any sexual contact?" He continued.

"Four years ago."

The doctor looked up at me from his clipboard. "Are you sure?"

I chuckled awkwardly, "yes, I'm sure."

He raised an eyebrow before lifting up the paper he was looking at and glancing at the papers underneath. "Miss. Khan... you're almost one month pregnant."

I blinked.

And almost immediately my mind went blank.

Even Ro was in shock.

I stared at the doctor for a good couple minutes before gathering up the words to speak again. "W-what?"

"Your nausea and dizziness are pregnancy symptoms. As are the headaches. The nosebleed is probably a result of the sudden changes in your body which you have not grown accustomed to just yet, but nonetheless it too is a pregnancy symptom," he said. "And to be certain, we checked your urine test and you are,

in fact, pregnant."

"That's *impossible!*" It came out as a whisper. "I haven't had sex in four years."

The doctor hesitated. "Is there any chance that maybe you were unaware that someone—"

"No," I said quickly. "No, that's impossible."

"How certain are you?" Ro asked, standing up.

"Near to a hundred percent. Her urine had hCG in it, or human chorionic gonadotropin. It is present in urine after an egg has been fertilized," he looked back at me. "You're pregnant, Miss. Khan."

I shook my head.

"That *can't* be... I swear, doctor! I haven't had sex... there's no way..."

"Well, if you come in next week then we can do another test to be more sure. By five weeks, it's highly unlikely that the test will be wrong."

"We'll definitely be coming back," Ro said as she grabbed my arm. "Thanks Doc."

The doctor nodded, "I will see you soon."

I smiled at the doctor as Ro pulled me out of the office.

We walked down the hall silently, both of us in shock for a moment before Ro suddenly stopped walking. "How the hell is this happening?" Ro asked as she started pacing.

I shook my head, not knowing the answer.

"You've never had sex before—" Ro suddenly stopped pacing, as if she realized something. She looked at me, looked away, but then looked back. "You had sex with Atem four years ago?"

I nodded. It happened pretty much every night during that one week on the boat in Egypt.

"Did you use protection?"

I hesitated, but shook my head.

"Did he come inside you?"

I was taken aback by the blunt question but I knew she was serious and wanted my answer. So I nodded, rather gingerly.

Ro scoffed. "How many times?"

"A lot..."

"May, how could you *not* think you'd get pregnant?" She exploded.

"That was *four* years ago, Ro! And at the time I was *married* to him and frankly I thought I was never coming home! I didn't think it was a big deal," I yelled back. "And besides, I've never had sex since. Atem couldn't have gotten me pregnant." Though, I had to admit that Ro was right to yell at me. In all honesty, I don't remember worrying or thinking of pregnancy at all at the time. I just wanted to be with him.

Ro shook her head. "No... what if..." She shook her head again, "Oh god I'm going crazy."

"What?" I asked. "What if what?"

She hesitated and looked at me. "You said the day you came back... all the things that had to do with him were taken away from you, right?"

I nodded, remembering that day.

"Then what if all that was his includes *his* kid?" She asked. "You said that all of a sudden all of the things that were his came back yesterday. So what if that includes *his* kid?"

My shoulders dropped.

Was that possible?

No.

But if time travel was possible then...

"Why..." I whispered. "Why is this happening *now*?" All I could think of was that Atem never ended up killing the wizard. He was still alive and he was messing with me.

What else could explain this?

I was *pregnant*.

Four years after I had sex. Four. *Freaking*. Years.

"What a fucking asshole," Ro cursed as she began to walk off.

"Ro," I said. "He's not—"

I stop talking when she abruptly stopped walking. She then turned around and walked back towards me. "Listen May, I'm sorry if I sound *cold*, but this guy, whether he's an ancient Egyptian Pharaoh or not, came into your life, got you to fall in love with him, had sex with you *and* possibly got you pregnant... and then disappears! Leaving you behind to pick up all the shattered pieces of your heart on your own," she yelled. "And now *this*. A baby? You're *pregnant* and where is he?"

There was a lump in my throat and I tried to swallow it back.

"In my book, this puts him at the level of a goddamn mother fucking asshole."

I knew she was just worried about me. I knew she was saying this because she was stressed out for *me*. But nonetheless, her words hurt.

She bit her lip when she realized that she hurt me. "May," she whispered as she stepped forward and hugged me.

I hugged her back.

"May... you're *twenty-three*. You're so young. I know you love kids but pregnancy is a big deal. You know that," she pulled away and held my face in her hands. "If you are pregnant, you have a *big* decision to make... are you going to keep the child or not?"

"You mean adoption?"

Ro hesitated.

"Abortion," I whispered the frightening word.

She blinked but didn't let go of my face. "May, you're young and beautiful and have so much going for you—"

"If I *am* pregnant, Ro, I'm not going to kill the baby."

She let out a breath. "I knew you wouldn't," she let her hands fall to her sides. "But remember May, if you decide to keep this baby, your entire life will change."

I nodded.

She turned around and started to walk off.

When we reached Blake in the waiting room, I could tell that he immediately sensed the tension. So he didn't ask any questions.

I wasn't mad at Ro. Not at all. I loved her to death and I knew she would have my back till the day I die. And so I also knew that she was very worried.

When we dropped her off, she told me that she'd come to my place tomorrow and after I agreed, Blake and I drove off.

We stayed quiet for the rest of the drive, and Blake only really spoke up once we got back to my apartment.

"So... what happened?"

I poured both him and myself a glass of water, letting out a breath after I took a big gulp.

Neferkitti, who had jumped onto the counter, looked carefully at me as Blake walked over to the couch.

"May—"

"I might be pregnant," I blurted out.

His eyes widened before he let out a breath and ran his fingers through his hair. "What?"

I sighed.

"May," he called, softly. "How?" I gave him a silly look as he shook his head in disbelief and sat on the couch. "Are you sure?"

I shook my head too, walking over to him. "They told me to come back next week to do another test."

"Oh god," Blake dropped his head back. "Your brother is going to kill me."

"You?" I scoffed.

"I'm supposed to watch over you, not let you get yourself pregnant."

I rolled my eyes. "If he's going to kill you then what's he going to do to me?"

Blake looked at me carefully. "With who? Who's the father?"

I bit my lip as I looked at him, and then I got up and walked to my room. When I returned, I had a photo album in my arms. This was one of the things I found in the storage unit. An album filled with pictures from my year with Atem. I started putting it together when I realized I had a crush on him.

I opened up to a picture of Atem and handed it to Blake.

"Who is this?" He asked, though his face looked oddly confused. I had a feeling that deep down he recognized him.

"Atem," I answered.

Blake looked up for a moment before looking at me. "The person you were looking for that one day? The one who ended up making you call me after we hadn't talked for a while?"

I nodded.

"I thought you said that was a dream?"

"It... wasn't..."

Blake looked confused, but when he looked back down at the album and flipped the page, I saw his eyes widened. "What..."

I looked down at the picture he was looking at. It was a picture from Christmas. It was the grinning Blake with his arm around a uniquely not annoyed looking Atem.

"When..."

I let out a breath, deciding to finally explain it all to Blake.

I tried to be clearer about it than I was with Aunt Maya and Ro... but I think the fact that I had pictures this time to prove his existence helped.

And when I was done explaining, all Blake could really do was gawk. "But if what you're saying is true, this guy was here four years ago."

I nodded.

"Then how could you be pregnant with his kid?"

"I've never had sex with anyone else, Blake."

He shook his head in disbelief. "This is crazy,"

"I know."

Blake looked at me and then back at the photo and then back at me. He then sighed. "Okay, so if you *are* pregnant and he *is* the father... then that means he's not here anymore."

I nodded.

"Oh jeeze, I think I'm going to have to sleep this one out."

I let out a short laugh.

"You're going to keep the baby?"

"*If* I even am pregnant, then yeah. I am."

"May—"

"Actually, let's not talk about it anymore," I said. "For all I know, the doctor might be wrong. We'll wait a week to be sure... then we'll figure it all out."

"May... this is not—"

"Seriously, Blake."

He watched me for a moment before putting an arm around me and pulling me close to him. "This is the last thing I'll say about it, I swear... *If* you do end up keeping the baby, I'd be honored to be its godfather."

I started to laugh, but nodded, feeling a little better now. "I'll keep that in mind."

~ † ~

Like the doctor had suggested, I came back to check again the next week. Ro came with me once more and this time, the doctor looked unbelievably baffled.

He had no idea what happened, but one week later, all the symptoms of pregnancy were gone.

He was so baffled that he asked me if by any chance I had a miscarriage in that week since he'd last seen me.

And of course, I hadn't.

The doctor made sure that I knew that something like this has never happened in the twenty-something years he's been practicing medicine... and while he spoke, I just smiled and nodded.

To my surprise... I wasn't as relieved as I thought I would be.

I mean, without a doubt, I knew that I was nowhere near ready to raise a baby... but maybe... maybe I actually wanted the baby after all.

There was nothing to do about it now, so Ro and I left the hospital while Ro blabbered away about how relieved she was that I wouldn't have to deal with being a single mother.

And as she spoke, I held my belly and sighed to myself.

Blake was the one who drove us to the hospital again, and when Ro and I got into his car, Ro shared the great news with Blake.

Blake looked at me with a smile and I smiled back.

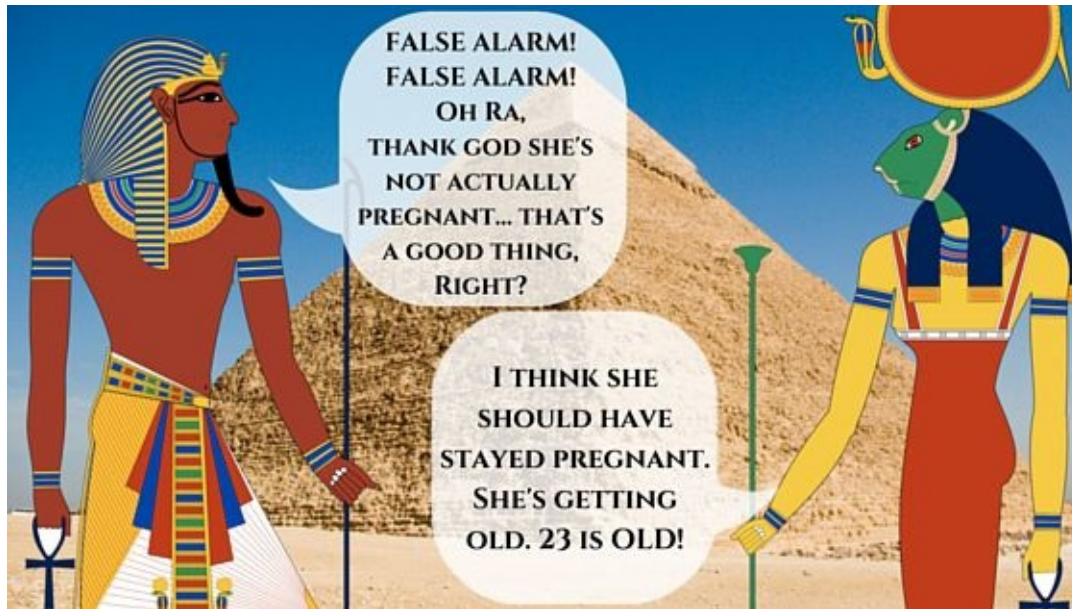
And then we drove home.

Of course, I was the only one with the slightly heavy heart. I would never say this out loud, but I was definitely, undoubtedly disappointed with the fact that I wasn't going to be the mother of Akhenatem's child.

Weird.

I know.

~ † ~



My Social Media!



thannujah-94



@thannujah_m



@thannujah_94
@thannu.draws



thannujah-
mathiyalagan

Chapter 53 - [The Law]

"It was the strangest thing ever," May said as she used her finger to push her hair behind her ear. "I mean, he *said* I've got all the symptoms of being pregnant... so I don't understand what happened but it was kinda scary."

I arched an eyebrow and shook my head. "That doctor needs to go back to medical school," I said.

She chuckled from behind her screen back in Oakville. "I'm fine though, so don't worry about me."

I smiled before sighing.

"Aunty Maya, you look exhausted."

Now I laughed, "you won't believe what's going on here."

"I'm sure you'll have a thousand great stories to tell when you get home."

I smiled at my princess, wanting so badly to tell her that Akhenatem wasn't dead in a tomb. But I couldn't tell her, not yet at least. Because he wasn't exactly completely alive either.

He clearly wasn't taking this resurrection thing very well.

Once I returned back to the hotel with him at about four in the morning, he collapsed. His face went unbelievably pale and his heartbeat was slowing. It almost even felt like he was getting thinner and thinner by the second. I wanted to take him to the hospital but he said not to. He assured me that no regular doctor could help him.

So I helped him to bed and hoped to god he would get better.

I had to sleep on the couch for two hours and then head out at six to explain what had happened last night. Akhenatem's chamber still had that open chamber with the resurrections spells. The only difference was that there was no longer a body on the bed and the scarab image was gone.

I made it clear that I was the one who opened the entrance. I lied, saying it was actually plaster and thankfully there was never any text over that area, aside from the note from Akhenatem which appeared and vanished on its own and only I had seen. If I had *actually* destroyed a spot with ancient text or images on it, I would have gotten in a lot of trouble.

Thankfully, the officers who accompanied me into the tomb last night were fine. After taking Akhenatem out of the tomb and leaving him in the car, I ran back up the cliff and shook the two officers awake. I lied to them and told them that I knocked out too, and it was probably because of all the dust from when I wiped off the paint from the wall.

They believed me.

Everything was fine.

But despite my attempts to make this all sound less crazy, my PhD students were thoroughly freaked out. The tomb filled with resurrection spells and no body *was* an odd thought, though. I was sure they thought that he rose from the dead and walked out at some point.

And they weren't wrong.

After that crazy long day, I had come home and seen that Akhenatem was not doing any better.

Which was why I didn't tell May about him when Ethan told me about all the craziness that was going on back at home. I for one knew that it was definitely no coincident that all of her things returned at that time.

But now a week had passed since then and Akhenatem was still sick. I had absolutely no idea what I was supposed to do to make him better. My only goal right now was to bring him back to my niece. I wanted nothing more than her happiness right now... but there was literally nothing I could think of doing to help her.

"Aunty Maya?"

"Yeah, yeah?" I snapped out of my thoughts and looked at her.

She chuckled. "You should sleep Aunty Maya."

"Right, you're right."

She blew me a kiss. "I miss you, can't wait to see you back home!"

I returned the kiss. "Just a little while longer, honey. Bye, Princess."

She waved.

And with that, I turned off my laptop.

I placed my face in my hands and rubbed my eyes, letting out a breath and stretching. I had so much more work to do... but so little energy. I definitely needed a nap if I wanted to function properly, but I had no time for a decent nap.

Oh, the life of a scholar.

"I think that was the test."

I was startled by the voice, causing me to stand up from the couch in the hotel's small living area and turn around.

Akhenatem was holding himself up against the doorframe of the bedroom, still looking extremely weak.

"You're up!"

He smirked, before struggling over to the couch and sitting down.

I sat down in front of him. "How are you feeling?"

"Horrible," was his response.

He *looked* horrible. He had thinned incredibly in a matter of days, literally to the point of looking boney.

He had dark circles and pale skin, his eyes looking practically lifeless.

"The pregnancy," he suddenly said, his voice deep and weak. "It was a test, I believe."

"What do you mean?"

"When I was put to rest, Lord Hepu, the high priest of Amun mentioned some sort of test," he took a breath, filling his tired lungs. "My reason for being resurrected in this time is purely to be with her. My court worried that once I was awake in your time, she may have moved on. If that were the case then I was meant to truly die and move on to the afterlife, since I am not needed here."

My eyebrows rose.

I was a little insulted by the fact that his court wanted to test my nieces' love for him. But at the same time, I understood. "So, did she pass the test?"

"Judging by the fact that I can stand again, I think so," he said before clearing his throat. "I believe her decision to keep the imaginary child meant she passed."

"So you think you'll begin to get better?"

"We will see."

I sighed in relief but then reached out and touched his cold, boney hand. "I think you should continue to rest," I said. "I will go grab you soup... something to help speed up the healing... but for now, rest."

He nodded.

"Pharaoh... I should call you that, right?"

His mouth quirked up, showing his amusement despite being so weak. "Just call me Akhenatem."

"Alright, Akhenatem. Do you want me to help you back to the bed?"

"I'm fine."

So I nodded my head and got up to go get that soup I was talking about. It didn't

take me long to get it, since there was a restaurant just downstairs, but when I returned to the room with the soup, I was surprised to see that the Pharaoh was still up. He was sitting at the couch staring at something in his hands.

When I walked over to him, he looked up at me in surprise.

"You okay?" I asked, noticing that it was my phone he was looking at.

He nodded, putting the phone aside. The screen was on long enough though for me to see that he was looking at a picture I took of May.

I sat back down next to him, pulling the soup out of the bag and handing it to him with a spoon. "You miss her?"

It was quite obvious that he didn't like to talk about his feelings. He smirked and sipped a spoonful of soup without answering me. He looked like he really enjoyed that sip of soup since he savoured it.

I opened my mouth to continue the conversation but after he swallowed the soup he sighed. "I thought that the sleep would go by quickly," he said. "As sleep usually does... but it felt like an eternity had passed when I woke up."

"You were quite disoriented for a bit," I said, not really knowing what else to say. I had no idea how to relate to him.

He looked down at the soup, silent for a moment. "How is she? Really?"

"She struggled... but I'm sure you know as well as I do that she's a strong person," I smiled at him. "She did what she had to do to keep moving forward."

"She looks different," he continued.

"She's grown."

He nodded. "Into a beautiful, strong, young woman, I presume?"

"You saw it with your own eyes in that picture, didn't you?" I chuckled. "She's on her way to becoming a teacher, you know."

"Good," he said. "That's what she wanted to do."

I smiled warmly at him. "So what exactly happened?" I asked. "How did you manage to make this whole thing work out?"

"Well, I'm not quite certain if any of it has actually worked out you," Akhenatem looked at me for a moment before looking back at the soup. "Did May tell you everything?"

I nodded. "I'm pretty sure she has."

"About my father and the gods forcing me to pick between her and my country?"

I nodded again.

"It was a test created by the gods... to see if I had truly changed my ways. If I had picked to return with May then my punishment would have been to have to live with the death of my people... simple as that."

"But you picked to stay," I remarked.

"And for that I was rewarded," he said. "Once I defeated my brother I returned to Thebes where I ruled as king for another four years. I used that time to completely repair the damage I had done. I gave all of the people I imprisoned a fair trial and compensated those who suffered due to my harshness."

"That's wonderful!"

"And once I felt that I had returned Egypt to its proper state of complete *maat*, I relinquished my throne to my brother. Once he was crowned Pharaoh of Egypt, I took up the offer of a reward for my actions. Lord Hepu was in no way strong enough to send me through time. He did not use dark magic as well. Instead however, the gods granted him with a spell book that could be used to put me in a sleep like state until the time was right."

"Magic... amazing."

He nodded. "I had the tomb prepared and hidden well from tomb robbers. I knew for certain that you would be the one to find it... if not then no one would. I also knew that you would figure out how to wake me up. May told me a thousand times that you were very intelligent. Besides, you were the only scholar who was ever able to figure out the truth about my childhood."

"It's quite an honor to know that you think that, Akhenatem."

"I was right, wasn't I?" He smiled for the first time since I met him.

I started to grin, truly feeling ecstatic. "So why the sealed shrine? Was it just to mess with us?"

"The only way the spell would actually work was if the spell book that was given to Lord Hepu was sealed inside the sarcophagus and shrine that was meant to be for me," he said. "After twenty-four hours of no sunlight or moonlight, it was meant to disintegrate, setting all the spells that had been cast onto me into motion. It was a means of making sure the book did not get into the wrong hands."

"Makes sense," I said. Well, it makes as much sense as a magical spell filled story could make. "So... let's say I didn't find you. What would have happened?"

"I would have been sealed in that tomb for all of eternity, in an endless sleep."

My eyebrows rose. "Wow, you took a big risk there."

"If it meant a chance to be with May, then..." he let out a breath and then continued to drink his soup.

I watched him for a long moment before I sighed. "I've been thinking about how I was going to get you back to our country," I said. "The only way is to take a plane, but you don't have a passport. We can't even apply for a passport since you don't have a birth certificate or a license or any sort of identification—"

"I have no idea what that means," he said, cutting me off but continuing to finish off his soup.

I chuckled. "It means there's no way as of now to get you to May."

Now I had his attention.

"I'm heading back home in two days... and there's only one person I know who might be able to help you, but he's one hell of a man who does not like to cooperate with me."

"I thought the stress would be over the moment I woke up," he sighed.

I smiled as I stood up. "Sorry to disappoint you, Pharaoh," I said. "But if there is one thing I can promise you, it's that I will do *everything* I can to reunite you with May. And while I work to do that, you rest. Rest and get better. May wouldn't want to see you like this."

Akhenatem looked at me for a moment and then he smiled and let out a breath. "You are as remarkable of a woman as May promised you would be."

I grinned. "Trust me, you haven't seen anything yet."

~ † ~

As soon as I got off that plane, I had Ethan drive our car down to the Khan Manor, as I liked to call it. May's family house was large, nothing in comparison to Ethan's father's place, but much larger than anything both Ethan and I could afford. And that meant something since Ethan and I were both successful in our fields.

I told Ethan about everything that was going on over the phone before I got here. He was absolutely stunned. I knew he was still in a state of disbelief since he remained silent for most of the ride... but I couldn't blame him. This was definitely a "you need to see it to believe it" kind of situation.

May's mother and I got along relatively well, so I admit I was quite pleased when she was the one who opened the door.

"Hey, Shreya," I smiled at my sister-in-law.

"Ethan, Maya," she returned the smile and hugged me. "I saw you on the news, I'm so proud of you."

I chuckled. "Thanks, Shreya."

"But what are you doing home so early?" She asked, "I assumed unearthing a

tomb would take months."

"It will," I said. "But we all have to take breaks right."

My sister-in-law looked at me carefully before nodding. "That's true," she said. "And come in, you two... you didn't bring Kiya with you?"

"She's with mum," I said. "I kind of have something serious to talk to you about."

"Really?"

"Well, not you... Darius."

Shreya let out a laugh of disbelief.

"I know," Ethan started, "I though she was crazy too."

"And what exactly is it for, Maya?" She asked. "What's so important that you'd walk right into the lions den?"

"May," I simply said.

Her eyes widened. "What's wrong with May?"

"I'll tell you two together."

Just as we reached the staircase, I was surprised my Marv making his way out of the living room. "Aunty Maya! Uncle Ethan!"

"Marv!" I rushed over and gave him a tight hug, "you're home!"

"Yeah, home for the weekend... and what about you? Why are you back?"

"I've gotta make a deal with the lion," I winked at him.

Marv knew exactly what I meant by that and both his eyebrows rose. "Goodluck."

I chuckled.

"Well, if it's any help to you," Shreya started as we walked up the staircase, "he just took a shower and usually he's a lot calmer after a shower."

Ethan snorted while I smiled at her. "Good to know."

When we reached his office, Shreya knocked before opening the door and letting us all in, including Marv, who decided to join the conversation.

Darius looked up from his paperwork in surprise before narrowing his eyes and setting all his work down.

"Honey," Shreya started, "Maya flew all the way home from Egypt to ask for your help."

He arched an eyebrow, leaning back in his chair.

Darius' office was the epitome of luxury. It had couches and wooden walls and hundreds of books on bookshelves... It even had a panoramic window behind the desk he was sitting at. It was a beautiful office indeed.

"Congratulations on your find, Maya," he said, his voice deep but emotionless. "You've made quite the name for yourself."

I could tell that he wasn't being sincere since the small smile on his face did not reach his eyes. Nonetheless, I thanked him.

"So what exactly is it you need?"

Well, it was now or never. "In short, there's a young man I need your help bringing from Egypt."

"What?"

I let out a breath, standing a little awkwardly in front of the so called Lion. "There's a boy... he's very intelligent and I want to bring him here... as a student under me."

"Get a student visa," he said, shrugging it off. "It's not that hard. Especially now that you have your recent work on your CV."

"You see, that's the problem," I said, taking a step forward to see him better. May's father was a handsome man. I remember when I first met him, seeing how handsome he was made me think that he must have been a real prince charming. And boy was I wrong. However, despite having such a cold demeanor he had very nice light, brown eyes, which I could imagine, if you didn't know him any better you would think were kind. "He's not exactly an easy person to deal with."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"He has no birth certificate. No passport. No nothing," I said. "In a sense, he doesn't even exist in this world."

Now I had his attention. He leaned forward, putting his elbows on the table and knotting his fingers together before holding them in front of his lips. "He does not *exist*?"

"I know, it's hard to understand but—"

"You are asking me, Maya, to bring to our country a young man who, in a sense, does not exist?"

I nodded, trying not to bite my lip. I didn't want to look like a child in front of him. I had to look firm and strong.

"What do you take me as? A fool?" He asked, sternly. "What is he, a criminal on the run?"

"No, *no*!" I said, quickly. "He's just... a member of a family of tomb keepers, sort of." I had to think of a lie, fast.

"*Tomb keepers*?"

I nodded.

He gave me a demeaning laugh before leaning back in his chair. "You might as well just leave, Maya."

I let out a breath. "Listen, Darius... I didn't want to have to do this but... I *can't* explain this to you completely. I just *can't*. Not yet. You just have to trust me—"

"Even if I wanted to help you, why would *I* trust *you*?"

I was taken aback by that and started to glare.

"Because both of us *love* May," I said, firmly.

He narrowed his eyes.

"We are polar opposites but the one thing we have in common is that we both love May."

"What does this have to do with May?"

"Again, I just *can't* explain this to you completely just yet... maybe if you came and met the young man you'd understand better but all I can say right now is that if you bring him here, May will be happy."

"You must think I'm crazy—"

"You barely ever see her, Darius... but when you do, I know you can see that she's *miserable*. She pretends that she isn't but she is..."

"She's right about that, dad." Marv said from behind me. "I know you've seen it too."

Darius looked at his son for just a moment before looking back at me.

"And I can assure you, Darius... I can bet my entire career on the fact that this boy I'm asking you to help *will* make her happy. He is important to her and I can't explain it just yet... but you'll understand soon."

Darius groaned and rubbed his face before standing up. "This is ridiculous—"

"Honey..." Shreya called. "It wouldn't hurt to at least go and meet the boy, would it now?"

Darius turned around and looked out of the panoramic window with his arms crossed. I assumed he was thinking about it.

After a moment of quiet, I looked nervously at Ethan, who was just standing there in silence. He was completely skeptical of the fact that Darius would help

us.

"*If* I were to help... and that's an *if*, what exactly would I say is my reasons? That I want to help my daughter be happy? No judge would take that as an acceptable reason to bring a basically non-existent foreigner into our country."

"I thought that part through... he is a *very* intelligent you man... if you come and meet him you will see. I was thinking we say that I really want to sponsor him and make him a student of mine... I'll even adopt him if I have to," as weird as that would be for May... at least he'd be here.

"Adopt him?" Darius turned and looked at me. "He has no family?"

I shook my head. "No one who is alive, at least."

He closed his eyes and looked like he was counting to himself to prevent any harsh words. "You are making this harder for me by the second."

"Darius, you are the *best* lawyer here... one of the best in the country," I said. "If you can't help us then no one can. *Please*. I'm leaving back for Egypt in two days... if you'd just come with me and meet him, you'll know he's worth it."

Darius looked back at me with a look of displeasure.

"Dad," Marv said. "If you don't do it then I'm going to try."

"I will too," Shreya added.

"That's unnecessary," Darius said. "I will go to Egypt and see who this boy is. If he is unimpressive then Maya you will be paying for my flight back home."

I let out a breath. "Yes... yes! Thank you Darius!"

"Don't thank me," he said, sitting back in his seat. "I haven't said I'd help you yet. I just want to see who this boy is."

I smiled, that was enough for me.

He may have been a cold hearted jerk... but I *knew* he loved May. He had a horrible way of showing it, but he loved her.

~ † ~

Just like Darius had said he would, he flew back with me to Egypt. We didn't talk at all, partly because he flew first class while I stayed back in economy. But that was good. I think us sitting next to each other would have been very awkward.

When we landed, Aarvind was the one who picked us up from the airport. I had asked him to watch over Akhenatem, telling him that he was a son of a friend who wasn't doing so well.

I trusted Aarvind a lot because he was serious, yet willing to help.

"How is he?" I asked as Aarvind helped to load my bag and Darius' bag into the trunk of the Jeep.

"Much better," the young man said. "He told me yesterday that I didn't need to come to check on him anymore. But I did, of course."

I smiled, glad to hear that.

Darius didn't say a word to me during the whole ride to the hotel. Even when we got there, he didn't say a word to me. He only spoke up when we opened the door to my hotel room and Akhenatem walked out from the bedroom. He looked unbelievably healthy again. The muscle had returned to his bones and his skin had returned to a beautiful copper colour. He looked healthy now, his dark eyes looking bright.

"*That's* him?" Darius asked, stepping into the room.

I nodded, though I couldn't help but notice the look of surprise on Akhenatem's face.

Darius set his small suitcase aside but then hesitated. And then the two just

looked at each other for a moment. I wondered if Darius felt that same déjà-vu feeling that Ethan felt when he saw him. "What's your name?" Darius asked, firmly.

"Atem," he said, shortening out his name.

"Your full name, boy."

"Akhenatem..."

"Darius, he doesn't have a last name, sort of."

"No family name?" He looked at Atem as he sat down on the couch.

"My father's name is Ahmenmose."

"Then make that your last name," Darius said. "Some cultures use their father's names as last names, so that's fine."

I started to smile, but then Darius looked at me. "Do you think I'm stupid?" He suddenly asked.

"What?"

"His first name is Akhenatem?" He asked. "Do you think I don't know that that is the name of the Pharaoh you are studying? Do you think a judge won't notice that and find that suspicious?"

"That's actually his name, Darius," I said, honestly, sitting next to him on the couch. "I know it sounds strange but like I said before, I can't exactly explain it just yet."

Darius rubbed his face with his hand. "This is absolutely absurd."

"Tomb keepers like to name their children after Pharaoh's?" I tried, making it up on the spot.

Darius rolled his eyes. "This is a waste of my time."

"Please Darius... for May—"

"Maya, it could take *months* to get the permission needed to get him a passport. Then another couple months to get him to be allowed to come to our country."

"But all of it will be worth it in the end, May would be so happy—"

"That's *if* it even works out. This is not a simple case—"

"But you're the best of the best," I said, trying to flatter him into agreeing, though I also knew deep down that it was true. He *was* one of the best. "If you can't do it then no one can. So please, at least try."

Darius looked annoyed but then he sighed. "Keep your name as Atem," he said. "Atem Ahmenmose."

"So you're going to help us?"

"You to prove his capacity to be a valuable student of Egyptology—"

"Yes... yes. I can do that," I said. "Iesha, my friend, she's an expert in hieroglyphs and a very highly respected official and scholar in Egypt. I could ask her to come in and take a look at his skills—"

"What skills?" Darius asked, sternly.

I looked at Akhenatem.

"I can read and write fluently in my—" he hesitated, "—the language of the ancients. I can also read and write in English."

I nodded, looking back at Darius. "I am sure Iesha will be impressed by him. He's very good... it's almost as if the language was his mother tongue," I didn't actually ever see him read or write in hieroglyphs but I knew I wasn't lying when I said what I did. "I can have her write a letter to support his intelligence."

Darius stood up. "You have one day to get me that letter. I'm booking my ticket back home for tomorrow night. I can't stand this heat."

"I'll have it within the next couple hours!" I said, thrilled.

"It better be good. You are asking me to do something ridiculous and I refuse to

go through with it unless I have a chance of winning," he said, beginning to walk to the door and grabbing a hold of his small suitcase on his way there. "I care more about my credibility as a lawyer than I do for my rebellious daughters happiness."

I let out a breath, knowing he didn't really mean that.

"Mr. Khan," Akhenatem called.

Darius opened the door, but looked over at the Pharaoh.

"Thank you," he said, sounding sincere.

"Yes, thanks, Darius," I added.

Darius looked at the young man for a moment, and then at me. He then let out a demeaning huff. "Don't thank me. I'm not doing it for either of you, anyways." He then walked off, shutting the door.

After a moment, I looked at Akhenatem. "You met him, right? In this other life?"

"I called him an incapable father who does not respect his daughter."

I laughed. "Well, it's no wonder he agreed to help you."

He looked at me, confused.

"Darius is... a confusing man. He loves May and acts this way to her because he wants the best for her. He thinks her becoming a lawyer would be just that, the best thing for her," I explained. "He treats her like this to try and scare her into doing what he thinks is best. Because he loves her."

Akhenatem let out a huff, almost identical to that which Darius let out before he left.

"If you really said what you did to stick up for May, to try and protect her, then after sleeping off his anger he probably realized he liked you," I said. "If he liked you in this other life then maybe that's why he agreed to help you."

"Because he loves May," Akhenatem said, more to himself before rolling his

eyes. "Fathers."

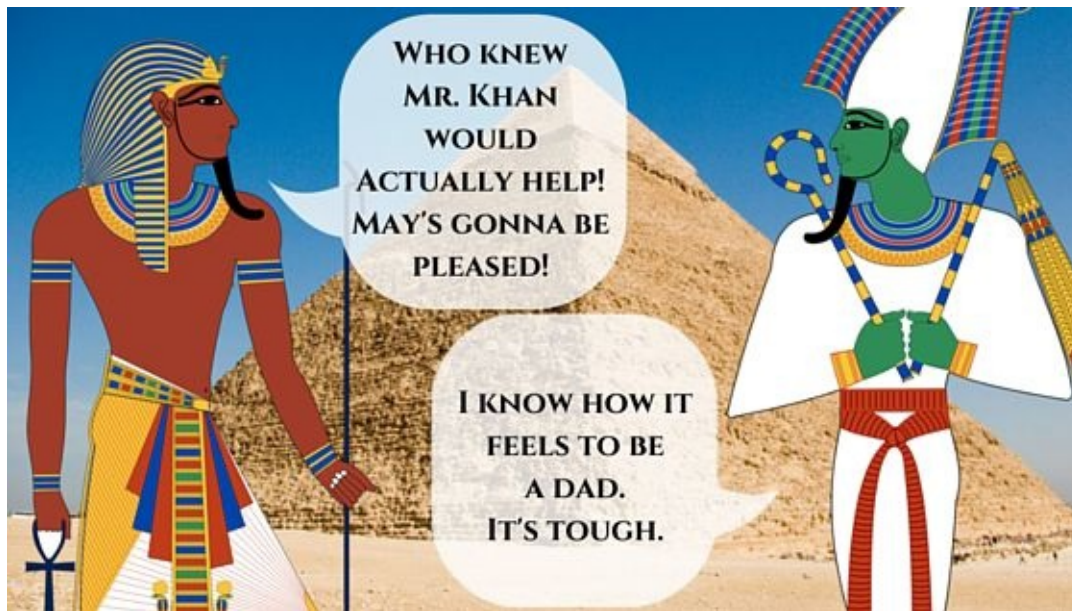
"Yeah."

"It would mean a lot to May to know this. Since he's horrible at showing that he cares about her," Akhenatem said as he looked at me.

I nodded. "Is it bad to say that he reminds me a little bit of how I imagined you would have been as a mean Pharaoh?"

Akhenatem looked at me with surprise but then smiled a small smile. "No," he said. "To be honest... I was thinking the same thing."

~ † ~



HEY EVERYONE!

Just thought I'd let you know that a little bit later this week I'll be putting up a bonus chapter before the next upload!!! I hope you're excited!!

Thanks so much for reading, as always! Please don't forget to VOTE, COMMENT and FOLLOW!!! You guys have been doing a lot of that recently and it's made me so happy and eager to keep uploading! ='D! I love knowing what you think of the story!!!!

Thank you so much!!!!

Love,

Luckycharms <3



Bonus Chapter - [The Little Details]

Hello my beloved readers!!!!

So as I promised, here is the BONUS CHAPTER!!!!!! Just a short preface that I hope you will all PLEASE READ!!!

So after that chapter with the time that May first did the dirty with Atem, A LOT of you had asked me why I didn't put in the details. The truth is, I've never ever written something like that before so I was sure I'd be able to do a good job!

BUT that being said, I really did wanna give it a shot and all of the readers of this story seem super friendly so I thought that if there was any story I should try it out for, it would be this one XD!

Anyhow, this Bonus Chapter is thus the details of that first special night between Atem and May (Chapter 38 - Beauty and the Marriage Proposal, to be specific), told in Atem's perspective. I chose to do it in his because it's been a while since we've heard from him. Plus I'm also sure we all wanna know how he really, deeply feels about May. So yes,

WARNING - KINDOFSORTOF MATURE THEMES WILL FOLLOW!!!

READERS DISCRETION IS ADVISED

If you are uncomfortable with mature themes, please still scroll till the end to read about a sort of CONTEST thing I'm doing!

Thanks for reading guys!!

Love,
Luckycharms



~ † ~

I did not suspect at all that in the end I would ever be disappointed with May's decision. I knew she wasn't a simple-minded woman and I knew with a little bit of an explanation, she would come around.

Though I will not deny that her choice to be so difficult was annoying.

It bothered me to think that there was such a complicated view of love in May's time. Though the wizard had told me that it did not exist, I knew *that*, at the very least, was a lie. It did exist. I saw it many times while I was in her time, I read about it too. Most books in May's world were about love, after all.

The only problem was that it was always so complicated.

Aurora and Alec got it right, in my opinion.

The two were a perfect example of how simple it should be.

I have seen them fight and argue and annoy each other, yet they still loved each other truly. They never let anything harm the love that they knew they felt for one another.

Not once in my time there had I seen Aurora show a hint of jealousy when Alec proved his closeness to May. Not even when he acted close with any of his other woman friends. And the same goes for Alec. It was the proof I needed to see to know that the two trusted each other.

It seemed to me that there were no rules in their relationship. When they were mad, they showed it. When they were annoyed, they showed it. When anything bothered them, they showed it. And of course, when they wanted to express their love to one another, they did.

That's how it should be, in my opinion.

Simple and straight forward.

No beating around the bush. No complicated rules. No falsehoods.

I may be relatively new to love myself, but that's what I thought it should be like.

In complete honesty, I think May and I were close to that ideal. We argued *a lot*, though I must admit that that may have had something to do with the fact that I was... a difficult person to deal with.

And I hoped to the gods that she was honest with me.

I was being completely serious when I told her I would do everything I can to make her happy once all of this nonsense with wizard was over. At this moment, I had absolutely no idea how I was going to do that, but I would try my best.

And it was the fact that I knew I would do this that made me certain I loved her.

I continued to kiss her neck, knowing quite well that she enjoyed this. The oils on her skin made her taste sweeter than usual, but it was still nice. This kind of

sweetness I could tolerate.

These oils also caused every breath I took to be filled with the scent of lilies. My favourite flower. The maids who helped her must have clearly done this on purpose.

"Hey, 'Tem," she called.

The nickname annoyed me, but I pulled my lips away from her neck and looked at her.

When her eyes met mine, I saw her smile a little shyly. "I don't think I've said this properly before... but I love you," her smile grew. "I really do. A lot."

It was strange to think that *I* was the one who expressed my love for her first. This was the first time I had heard her say those words yet I've said them at least a couple times. Of course, I took no offence to that. So I simply smiled. "I love you too, you annoying peasant girl."

She laughed.

I loved to hear her laugh.

And then she kissed my lips.

At first I was fine with just the kisses and listening to her giggles when I touched her in sensitive places. That was how it usually was between us, surprisingly or not. Once, back in her world, I let my hand explore the skin beneath her shirt but that was the closest I ever got with her to 'second base,' as Alec would call it.

Unbelievable.

I know.

I was the Pharaoh of Egypt who has been living alone with a girl for over a year and the farthest I had gone was feeling the skin of her abdomen. Here in Egypt, I have had sex with girls I didn't even know. Exchanging a couple words and throwing in the reminder that I was the all-powerful Pharaoh of Egypt was all I needed to get a girl to have sex with me.

Of course, May was different.

May was unbelievably, remarkably, annoyingly different.

"So," May asked when she pulled her lips away from mine. "After we get married, does that make me May, Horus, Mighty Bull of the two Lands, he of the Sedge and Bee, Son of Ra Akhenatem?"

At first I didn't understand the question... but I was also rather impressed with her for remembering all that from my Royal Title. So I just stared at her before I realized she meant her last name.

I chuckled. "Well, no. You'd just be May, the Great Royal Wife of Akhenatem. But if you really want, you can be May Akhenatem."

"Your first name as my last name?" She didn't seem too satisfied.

"What's wrong with that?"

She shrugged, her eyes looking to a side as she clearly tried to think of a way to argue with me. "It sounds a little too weird. Like I belong to *you* or something. A family name would be better because—"

"You *do* belong to me," I said.

Her eyebrows rose as she looked back at me. "I do not," she argued. "Just cause you're a Pharaoh doesn't mean you can take possession of *me*."

"It has nothing to do with me being the Pharaoh," I responded.

"Then it has to do with you being a man?"

I narrowed my eyes at her. "You're just trying to pick a fight with me, aren't you?"

That made her chuckle.

"And no," I said. "It doesn't. Because technically *I* belong to *you* too. Is that not what the condition of love and marriage is?"

Her body radiated warmth, which was comforting since my balcony was open

and the cool air from the Egyptian nights was filling the room. "Oh," she said, probably too surprised by my response to think of another way to argue with me. "I see what you mean."

I flashed my eyebrows at her, glad that she had nothing else to say to that. So I lowered my head to kiss her again but she stopped me by putting her fingers on my lips. I proceeded to kiss her fingers before I looked back at her. "What?"

"How many other girls have you slept with in this bed and told you owned them?"

I was taken aback by the question, enough to groan and get up off her. "*May*," I practically hissed as I crossed my legs and sat near her feet. "You are absolutely annoying."

She got up too, grinning.

It was then that I realized she was *still* purposely trying to aggravate me. "Why are you acting like this?"

She shrugged, moving closer and crossing her legs in front of me. "We're getting married tomorrow, I want to know. I'm not mad or anything. I'm just curious."

I closed my eyes and pressed my temples with my finger and thumb.

"Well," she asked. "How many?"

"None—"

"Liar," now she sounded annoyed.

"Let me finish," I continued, looking at her. "None in this bed. I never let anyone into my room back then."

Her eyebrows rose in clear happiness. "Really?"

I nodded.

"Why didn't you let anyone in here?"

I shrugged. "This room was my private room. My safe haven, I guess you could

call it," I answered. "It was the only place where I could experience peace and quiet."

"Then why'd you let me in here?" She asked.

"I'm asking myself the same question now," was my annoyed response.

She chuckled at that before leaning forward and kissing my lips once again. I kissed her back, despite my irritation, and when she pulled away I decided to get this over with. "Do you have any other irrelevant questions you want to ask me?"

"Where *did* you and these girls do it then?"

I rolled my eyes before leaning back and holding myself up with my hands. "I don't know... in their rooms? Anywhere that was empty? The hallways—"

"The *hallways*?" She looked practically horrified. "What if other people saw?"

I shrugged. "It's hard to think straight in the heat of the moment."

She grimaced before pursing her lips and looking away.

"You better not be angry," I said, reminding myself that no matter what she was a woman. Women nearly always overthink things. "*You* asked the question."

"I'm not," she responded. "I was just curious, is all."

"Fine," I said, getting ready to crawl back into bed to sleep. But she stopped me and chose to ask another question.

She stayed silent for a moment before she spoke. "Is sex *really* all that great?" She whispered the question, as if she didn't want anyone to hear but me. Not that anyone else *could* hear us.

As I watched the embarrassed look on her face, it was obvious to me now that her inquiry had more significance to it than I initially thought. Her cheeks were red and she avoided looking at me until I placed my fingers under her chin and forced her to look at me.

"Hmm," I smiled.

She pulled my hand away from her face but kept a hold of it. Her fingers entwined with mine as she looked down at them. "What?" She asked. "I'm curious."

I kept smiling. "You want my honesty?"

She nodded.

"It is great," I said. "Better than you'd ever imagine."

She finally looked at me on her own. "Really?"

I nodded. "And judging by the look in your eyes, I assume you hope for an answer that is more than just words."

Her blush was now full blown. "Perv."

"What?"

"Pervert." She clarified.

I chuckled before kissing her for the hundredth time that night. This kiss was deeper, more passionate, and I knew that I was right to assume what I did.

I couldn't deny that I was happy that things were beginning to work out this way. I think it was just about time.

When I felt her breathing hasten, I pulled away and got up from the bed before tugging her arm and pulling her up to. "Wha—"

When we were both standing, I kissed her once more, holding her face in my hands. "If you want me to stop, you have to tell me. Do you understand?" I asked her against her lips.

Her eyes were wide and filled with nervousness, but she nodded.

"Relax, May," I said before kissing her nose. "It's just me."

Now she smiled, but I guess she could not help the nervousness just yet. So I took a small step back, holding her hands in mine. She was watching me intently, as if trying to examine my every move. I decided what was best was to

calm her nerves so I just kissed her again. I kissed her lips and her neck and ran my fingers through her hair until I felt her shoulders relax and her body lose its stiffness.

When I felt she was ready, I pulled the sleeves from her dress over her shoulders and let it slip right off her body and onto the floor.

It was so much easier here. There were not buttons, no zippers, no clasps, nothing of the sort. I thought this was better, since the time it would take to remove your clothes was so quick that it wouldn't ruin the mood or cause May to return to her state of nervousness.

I knew what I was doing was working since she wrapped her arms around my neck and embraced me tightly. Her bare chest was pressed against mine and as I ran my fingers over the curves of her body I could not help but feel an excitement within me.

Here she was, the love of my life, right in front of me.

Naked.

I pulled away from her embrace, surprising her, but nonetheless I took a step backwards and sat down on the bed. I just stared at her for a moment, absorbing in everything about her.

She was standing in the perfect spot. The moonlight from my open balcony streamed in and reflected off her skin, making her look more divine than I already thought she was.

She was so beautiful.

It was a wonder that I never saw this about her so long ago. I remember the moment when I first *really* looked at her, not impressed. Her hair was tied back into a ponytail, she was wearing jeans and a t-shirt with sleeves that stretched all the way down to past her elbows. On top of all of this she even wore an apron since she was icing cakes.

The only skin I could see were pretty much her hands and her neck and her face. Even her feet were covered in socks. Plus, that day her eyes looked exhausted, albeit probably no thanks to having to deal with me the night before. Her skin

was dull and the expression she wore that day was completely unwelcoming.

I was definitely not impressed.

Now suddenly all of that had changed.

Everything had changed.

As the days went on I realized that all those things I previously thought were unimpressive were exactly what made her beautiful.

Her hair was tied back to hold down her magnificent lions mane from getting in the way of her daily activities. Nearly all her skin was pretty much all covered because of her desire to keep what was underneath hidden from everyone except that special someone. Her face and eyes looked exhausted because she was such a hard worker. And her unwelcome expression towards me was simply a display of her intelligence. She was wise to be careful around me back then.

It amused me to think that falling in love could change how you looked at someone.

It took me a year after meeting this girl who did not excite me one bit to realize that she was, in fact, the most beautiful woman I had ever known.

As I stared at her, I smiled. Her hair, as usual, tumbled over her shoulders as she shifted her weight from one leg to the other. She was sweating, maybe because she was embarrassed, and some of her hair stuck to her neck because of it.

Her breasts were full and her curves were perfect. She wasn't perfectly thin and I appreciated that since I liked the softness in her features. Though, as I have said before, I did wish she would exercise more for the sake of her health.

But that wasn't important now.

I started to notice that she still had a rather new scar on her knee from the time she fell off the bike I had gotten for her. I remember feeling bad about it, though I hadn't done anything. But it was still on her skin and for some reason it made me feel more like she was mine.

She also had many birthmarks. One on her waist, another on her thigh. There

was a small, perfectly triangular shaped one under her left breast as well. But as I examined it, I realized that May seemed to be loosing her patience. "Stop staring," her cheeks were flushed and she tightened her grip on my hands. "It's weird and embarrassing."

I chuckled before pulling her arms so that she was closer to me. Though she was still standing, I hugged her and kissed her stomach, making her take a sharp, surprised breath.

Her hands were on my shoulders and when I pulled her down, she sat down on my lap, straddling me while keeping her hands on my chest and her face right in front of mine. "Don't be embarrassed," I said, softly. "You're beautiful."

Her embarrassed expression brightened into a happy smile before I closed my eyes and kissed her lips. My heart raced as I used my hands to memorize her features... the shape of her breasts, the depth of her curves, the imperfections in her skin.

Eventually, I stood up, lifting her up with me and placed her gently on the bed before removing my own clothes. When I got on top of her and kissed the skin of her chest, I felt her body shudder under me. This was a new feeling to her, and I was getting the sense that she liked it.

And I knew I was right because when I sat up for just a moment to adjust myself into a more comfortable position, she sat up to, wrapping her arms around my body and kissing my neck.

I let out a deep chuckle as she moved her lips down to my collarbone. Her hands explored my body just as I had done to her a couple moments earlier. Her fingers grazed over my skin as gently as she possibly could... as if she were worried of hurting *me*.

The thought made me chuckle again.

"Am I doing to right?" She whispered it against my skin, asking me rather fearlessly now.

"Yes," I said. "Very, right."

She looked at me with a wide smile, looking both pleased and excited. Her initial

nervousness had clearly vanished.

I pushed her back down on the bed and kissed her a little more aggressively now. She responded with smiles and soft giggles, both of which were enough of an approval for me to go further.

And so I did.

I touched her in places that no man has ever touched her before and when she bit her lip and held herself back I told her that she didn't need to be shy.

So almost immediately she let out her moans of pleasure and that was enough to completely satisfy me.

I wanted her so badly... No, that wasn't it. I *needed* her. I realized now that I didn't know what I'd do without her. Within such a short period of time, she became everything to me. She had literally taken over my thoughts and despite having so many more important things to deal with... I was fine with that.

So as soon as I felt she was comfortable enough, I kissed her lips and let myself finally, *really* become one with her.

The complications of relationships and love and everything else in the world meant nothing at that moment. All the silly little details vanished and it was at this moment that everything became so very simple.

The only thought in my mind was how much I loved her. How much I loved May Khan. And I knew that as she reached her peak of pleasure, she was feeling the same way about me.

Despite not being new to this, it felt new. Maybe because this was the first time I actually felt love for the person I was with.

The thumping in my chest and the ringing in my ear and the warmth of her skin against my skin and the uncontrollable feeling of love in my heart... all of it together was the most glorious thing.

As her back arched up and she let out her gasp of pleasure, I felt unbelievably victorious. It was her first time and I helped her feel that high of making love.

That was a victory to celebrate indeed.

My release came very soon after and when it did, I pressed my forehead onto hers and the two of us caught our breath together.

After a moment, she began to laugh, making me open my eyes and look at her.

"Wow," she whispered as she removed her arms from around my neck and dropped them above her head. "I guess... I guess I get the hype."

"That's all you have to say?" My voice was quiet and husky since I was suddenly exhausted. I rested my head on her chest and could hear her fast heartbeat.

She always exhausted me. I could fight and run and do so many other things for hours if need be without getting so exhausted. However, an argument with her or a kiss from her and now, a short while of lovemaking with her and my energy was wiped completely away.

She chuckled and I felt her hand stroking my head. "It was absolutely amazing." Her voice sounded soft and smooth.

When I lifted my head and looked at her, she looked back at me with eyes filled with nothing but happiness and love.

So I kissed her again.

I pressed my lips hard against hers and when I felt her smile against my lips I decided I could definitely work up enough energy for Round Two.

She was going to be my wife tomorrow... It wouldn't hurt to celebrate a little, now would it?

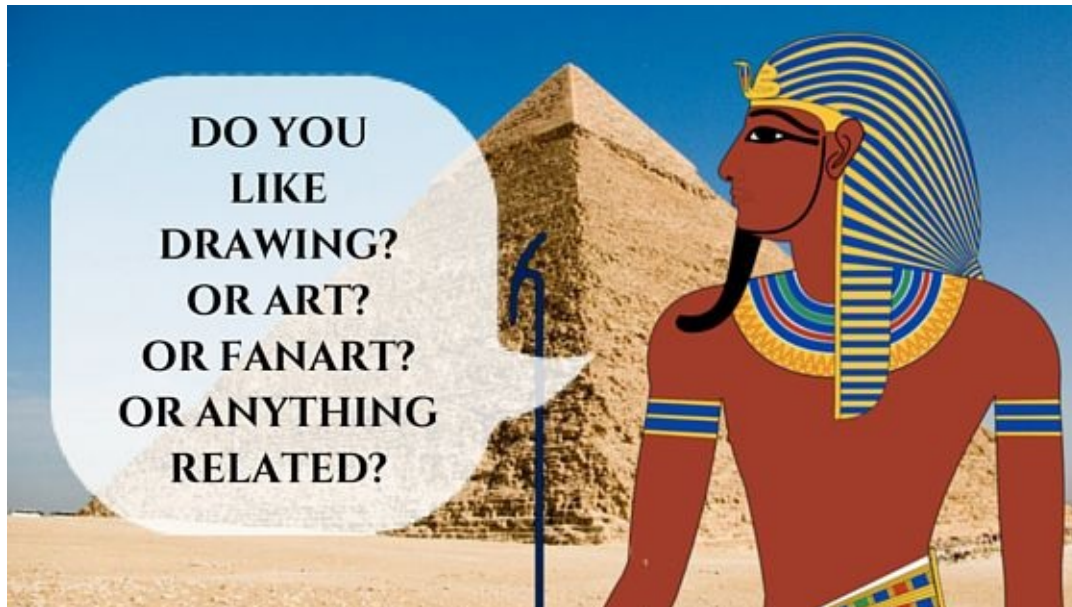
~ † ~

HELLO AGAIN!

So, WHAT DID YOU ALL THINK? Please COMMENT and tell me if you

liked it! Id love to hear your thoughts and it'll help me decide whether or not it would be wise to do this in the future XD

Now as for the *SPECIAL CONTEST THING*, I'll let my Egyptian Story Friend help me:



Okay so it's not really a contest, YET... LOL!

I was just hoping that if you like to DRAW/PAINT/PHOTOSHOP or anything of the sort, I wanted to see if anyone would like to send me their

art of Akhenatem or May or Neferkitti or anyone! Maybe you have some doodles or maybe you'd be totally down to draw something now! Whatever it is, SEND THEM TO ME!!!! =D! I'd LOVE to see them!!

If you have something in mind, let me know!!!! Send me a private message RIGHT NOW and I will share my email address with you and you can send it to me whenever you're ready!!

Now for the contest part...

I was thinking that if I get a nice amount of artwork (maybe 5 or more) I'll do a draw and:

SEND THE WINNER A COPY OF BEAUTY AND THE PHARAOH AS A BOOK! =D

I'm currently working on self-publishing it so if I go through with the contest, then the winner will be one of the first people to get a copy!!!! ='D

So LET ME KNOW what you all think as soon as you can!! Again:

To "Enter": Send me a Private Message telling me you're interested!

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST: The next update will be coming in the next couple days! HEHE!

Love,

Luckycharms!

Chapter 54 - [Beauty and the Last Time]

Though it had been two months since Aunty Maya had discovered Akhenatem's tomb, it was still a big deal. I think part of the reason why was because a couple days ago, they finally opened up the tomb for reporters to go in and record it for their news broadcasts. But anyhow, it was May, and Akhenatem's tomb was being shown on literally every news channel.

Conveniently, it was on my birthday that the History Department decided that they were going to get together and watch the short new-documentary thing that our local news was playing.

During the day, the class threw me a surprise party with cake and everything. It was really nice and I had a blast.

Afterschool that day, the history teachers had all got together in their lounge and were sitting in front of a T.V., all looking excited. When I walked in, I came in the hopes of grabbing my bag and heading out, but of course, Mr. Rossi called me over. "Why don't you stay a while?"

"What are you guys doing?" I asked.

"Ms. Oli recorded the entire Akhenatem broadcast since it was playing during class time. We're going to watch it together," he said. "Why not watch it with us? Your aunt is the head of the team that found the tomb, after all?"

I shook my head, "oh... no, I'm kind of busy..."

"It's only a forty-five minute broadcast, May," Ms. Brenar said. "C'mon, it'd be fun."

"You're practically a celebrity since you're related to Doctor Maya," Mr. Rossi said in a whisper that I was sure he wanted everyone else to hear.

I laughed. "Thanks, but really—"

All of the history teachers started to fuss. I had no idea why they wanted me to stay so badly aside from the fact that it would be a chance for all of us to hang out.

Or maybe Mr. Rossi was right. Maybe everyone just wanted me to be here since I was related to 'Doctor Maya.'

So I sighed.

"Fine,"

Mr. Rossi grinned, patting the seat next to him.

I sat down next to him, wondering how bad it could possibly be. At least I could watch it and get it over with, right? How much longer would I be able to avoid the topic?

So I sat down and watched.

It was exactly how I imagined it was going to be. There were epic shots of the deserts, the pyramids and the many monuments of Egypt. There was a lady with a British accent doing the narrating, talking about the "marvels of Egyptian history." (Read it with a British accent to get the fullest effect.)

Then there was a short biography of Aunty Maya... all of which I knew already.

After that, they showed shots of images of Atem while narrating what they knew about his life.

His troubled childhood led to a troubled life. He ruled with an iron fist and cold heart and a no mercy policy. He did an excellent job scaring away the enemies by doing this. He also did a great job keeping Egypt under control.

"Fine, that's all interesting. But what is it really that intrigues us all about Akhenatem?" The blonde woman said with her accent. She then smiled, showing

her pearly whites. "It's the curse."

She showed more images of him while the woman told her audience that the stories say he was cursed for being cruel. He was sent into the future to be punished, but instead of taking the punishment, he used it to redeem himself.

"Through love," the woman said.

One of the history teachers swooned.

"However, this love story does not have the happy ending we all hope for when we hear of stories of redemption," the woman said. "This noble Pharaoh had no choice but to let go of his love in order to defeat his enemies in a great war. She then disappeared, forcing the Pharaoh and her to be separated forever. Devastated by his loss, he died shortly after... leaving his legacy behind for our very own Doctor Maya to rediscover."

I blinked.

I had heard this so many times now that, thankfully or not, it had little effect on me.

I guess it was a good thing. Not too long ago, I probably would have started crying.

After this point, the documentary started to show images of the tomb. The woman explained what was done in the tomb and the process that Aunt Maya took to open it all and find everything.

But then she paused from that to talk about this one specific wall. They were zoomed in on the face of a woman on that wall, explaining that this was apparently the mystery woman who Akhenaten was in love with.

And for obvious reasons, I started to smile.

I could tell that that was me, and that thought made me smile.

And as I admired the Egyptian art version of me, a man suddenly appeared on the screen. At the bottom of his screen was a name stating "Officer Naadir Malik."

"It was the most remarkable thing," he said. "Doctor Maya is hard working, she came back late in the evening to work some more so my partner and I joined her. She had discovered that if she erased certain painted words, an image of the Pharaoh would be underneath."

The screen returned to the image of the girl and began zooming out.

While zooming out and revealing the image of Atem facing me, the officers voice continued to speak over it. "I felt like Doctor Maya, after three thousand years, had finally reunited the two beings by revealing the image of Akhenatem."

I let out a breath.

"That's beautiful," Ms. Brenar said, practically in tears.

"I read somewhere that in Egypt, their wall images were more than just art," Mr. Rossi said. "A lot of times tombs would have images of offerings painted in them as a way for the deceased spirit to have food in the afterlife."

"So for all we know," Ms. Oli started, sounding sad, "while Akhenatem was lying there dying, he must have truly believed he'd be with his love again."

Mr. Rossi rolled his eyes humorously and chuckled. "Tragic."

"I wish it was as simple as that," I said before smiling and standing up. "I really should get going now. My family is having a birthday party for me," I lied.

The rest of the teachers didn't argue this time.

"Hey, do you think it's possible for you to ask your aunt to come in and do a talk at the school?" Ms. Oli asked.

I realized now that this was probably why they wanted me to stick around a little longer. I wasn't offended or anything like that, so I smiled. "Sure, I'm sure she'd love to. I'll talk to her about it when I get a chance."

Some of the teachers gasped while other's squealed in excitement.

I let out a laugh and waved at Mr. Rossi before grabbing my bag and heading out.

I drove home rather quickly and when I got home, I felt exhausted. So I walked into my room and collapsed onto my bed. Neferkitti joined me almost immediately. She jumped into the bed and snuggled up against me as I turned around onto my side and fell deep in thought.

I knew I shouldn't have stayed back and watched the broadcast.

All I could think about now was that stupid broadcast and that stupid wall painting.

Stupid Atem.

Did he really think that putting us together on a painting would be enough to actually bring us together? After all the crazy, unimaginable magic that the both of us experienced... he left the potential of our future together to a wall painting?

I scoffed to myself.

But just as I did I felt the tears escape again. Neferkitti looked up before meowing and rubbing her head against me.

I can't believe I was still crying about this. It was my twenty-fourth birthday... today marked the fifth year since I met him. And it had been four years since I lost him.

Yet I was still crying about it.

I tried to stop by finding the source.

What was bothering me this time? And I didn't need to think for too long to figure out what it was.

Did Atem really believe that the *painting* would be enough for us to be together? Was Ms. Oli right when she said that he died with that hope in his heart?

The thought that his hope was wasted was breaking my heart. It was breaking my heart but also making me realize that I was doing a horrible job at keeping that promise I made to him.

Let's admit it.

I wasn't happy.

Nor was I moving on.

All of these years had passed and here I was, still crying over him. If the afterlife was real... if that all really existed... then was he out there watching me? Was he miserable because I was miserable?

That thought made me more miserable.

I let out a breath, wiping my tears away and looking at that ring which I still wore around my thumb.

Today was going to be the day. Today was going to be the last time that I cried for him. The *last* time. From today forth, I had to promise myself that when I thought of him, I'd only be happy. If the afterlife was real and he was watching me, then he deserved just that.

He sacrificed everything to save his county... and then he died. There was nothing anyone could do for him aside from me, and if my happiness would make him happy then I'd be a horrible person if I didn't try.

I held the ring to my lips and kissed it. Neferkitti then snuggled up next to me again, curling up into a ball and sharing her warmth with me. I ran my fingers through her fur, feeling a little more relaxed.

And then I cried it all out for the last time.

~ † ~

I hadn't realized that I'd fallen asleep until I heard my phone buzzing against the wood of my side table drawer. My eyes fluttered open as I reached out and grabbed the phone.

When I looked at the screen, I saw Auntie Maya's smiling face.

I tapped the answer button, "hello?"

"May—" she cut herself off. "Whoa, princess, you sound tired."

"Yeah," I chuckled, rubbing my eyes. "I fell asleep."

"Asleep on your birthday?" Aunty Maya laughed. "Well you gotta wake up now, sweetheart. I've got a surprise for you at my office, which means you've got to get your butt over here."

I lifted myself up from my bed. "You didn't have to get me anything, Aunty Maya."

She snorted, "don't be silly. How long do you think it'll take for you to get here?"

I looked at the time, It was almost six which meant I was asleep for about two hours. "Twenty minutes?"

"Perfect," she said. "Bring the Queen."

"Got it."

After she hung up, I got up and went straight to the washroom. I washed my face before reapplying my makeup and changing into an orange dress that my brother had gotten me for my birthday. He was back in town for the weekend and dropped by this morning with my gift before I headed off for work.

It was a pretty dress that had a sweetheart neckline and cap sleeves. My brother knew exactly the kinds of clothes I like, and he always picked out dresses that looked great on me.

Once I was ready, I fixed up my hair once more and pulled out Neferkitti's carrier. Technically, she didn't need one of those since she was so well behaved, but letting her walk around on her own made people ask too many questions.

So I would put her in this and leave the top open for her to stick her head out of while I carried her. I liked to think of it as a litter... and Neferkitti was the queen who was being carried around in it.

I could have drove but the weather was nice out and her office wasn't that far

away anyways. It was a nice, summer afternoon, there was a light breeze and the sun was making its way down towards the horizon.

Since I was only wearing slightly heeled shoes, the walk was a comfortable one, and I felt so much better. Taking a couple deep breaths and exhaling was enough to make me feel completely relaxed.

As I approached the Egyptology building at Oakville University, I felt my phone vibrate in my hands. When I looked down at it I saw that it was a text from Blake.

Hey birthday girl :) Are you free for dinner tonight? I'm cooking. ;)

I smiled to myself as I read the text. Like I said earlier... today was the day I was going to start to move on. Having dinner with Blake could be a great way to start. So I responded.

Sorry Blake, I'm hanging out with my aunt tonight! How bout tomorrow?

Just as I hit send, a stranger bumped hard into my shoulder.

"Sorry," I said as I turned around and watched the guy continue to walk of. I scowled at him. Rude.

However, when I turned back in the direction I was walking, I was surprised by my father's car pulling up to the curb not too far in front of me. It was *for sure* his car... it was a gorgeous Mercedes-Benz GLA 250 4MATIC with the license plate: KHAN.

I raised my eyebrows and started walking slowly. What on earth was he doing here? Was Aunty Maya throwing me a party? And if she was... why would she invite my *dad*?

And even if she did invite him... why would he even come?

I heard the cars engine shut off, and to my surprise, Neferkitti jumped out of the carrier. "Neferkitti!" I called.

The right side back door opened right then and someone stepped out. Someone I knew.

"May," I heard Aunty Maya call as she walked down the stairs leading up to the Egyptology building.

But I ignored her.

My eyes stayed on him.

He was wearing a plain, white t-shirt with blue jeans and had a familiar scowl on his face as he looked up at the sky. But when Neferkitti pounced onto him, surprising him, he smiled. He smiled and hugged her, stroking her fur, as I stood there frozen, staring at him.

Both my father and my mother got out of the car right then, and from my peripheral vision, I could see that they had already spotted me.

Neferkitti suddenly jumped out of his arms taking a couple of steps towards me before looking back at him.

My lips started to quiver as my vision got blurry.

He gave me a warm, relieved smile... the smile that I had been waiting to see for so long... and the moment I saw it, I dropped my bag, my phone and the cat carrier and ran.

I ran towards him as fast as I could, ignoring everything else in this crazy world. Not even caring if maybe... just maybe I was only seeing things. Maybe it wasn't really him.

But I still kept running and it felt like forever. It felt like it took forever for me to get to him but when I finally did, my body slammed into his as I jumped into his arms and burst into tears.

"Akhenatem!" It came out as a whisper between my sobs.

He lifted me up and spun me around. When he set me back down I felt his lips press against my forehead. "May," was all he said.

There was relief in his voice as he said it, and he tightened his hug.

I couldn't stop crying, though earlier today was supposed to be the last time I

cried over this. I had promised myself I wouldn't cry anymore because of him but here I was, a couple hours later, breaking my promise to myself.

But I couldn't help but think that this time was alright.

Now I was crying because he was here, in my arms. I could feel his warm breath against my neck as he hugged me. He was here.

I didn't know how or why or what happened... but it didn't matter right now.

He was here.

Alive.

~ † ~

I didn't want to let go of him... suddenly, I was five years younger and I was acting like a child. It took Atem all of his strength to rip me off of him just long enough for us to make our way into Aunt Maya's office.

I was a little embarrassed when I finally looked around and saw that not only were my parents, my brother, Aunt Maya and Uncle Ethan looking at me, but so were a couple strangers who were walking down the street.

But right now I forced that thought out of my head.

Akhenatem was back.

He was *back*.

And everyone sat around him and I in Aunt Maya's office, as she explained to me all that had happened. It also seemed like the first half of this story was news to my parents and my brother because they stared at my aunt in shock, gawking.

The second half, however, consisted of more realistic things like getting Atem a passport and allowing him to come here with a Student Visa from Egypt. He had just flown in a couple hours ago with Aunt Maya, but had to go with my

mother and father and brother for a little while to sign some paperwork.

Then he came here, to *finally* see me.

I didn't know how to feel. I didn't know what to do except cry as held onto Atem's hand.

I was so happy.

I was absolutely thrilled.

"Stop crying, May," he said to me, pulling his hand away before he putting his arm around my shoulder. "I'm back, you don't need to cry—"

"Shut up, jerk!" I yelled as I pulled away from him and stood up.

His eyes widened in surprise, as were the eyes of everyone else in the room.

"Do you know the kind of hell you put me through?" I yelled. "And for what reason? To *test* you? Was the fact that you nearly *died* for your people not a good enough test? Did the your gods really have to put *me* through so much for *your* stupid, *stupid* test?"

Atem rolled his eyes at me, making me fume even more. "I thought I made you promise to move on?"

"I thought I made you promise not to *die*!"

He stood up, looking me straight in the eyes. "I didn't die!" He yelled back. "Does it look like I'm dead?"

"According to what Aunty Maya said, if I had moved on then you sure as hell would have!"

"Dear Ra, woman. It has been three thousand years and half a decade since I've seen you and you are still *exactly* the same!"

"What's *that* supposed to mean—"

"Dear god," my father cut me off. "Is this what I worked so hard for? Have some decency and stop acting like children. Act appropriately when you're surrounded

by adults."

I let out a breath before looking at him and just staring for a couple moments. "Dad..."

I never imagined he would help me so much. According to Aunty Maya, it took *a lot* of work on my father's part to bring Atem home. Lots of paperwork, lots of phone calls, lots of arguing and lots of sleepless nights. He did that for me. He did it without even knowing why it would mean so much to me. I guess my mom and brother were right all along... he really did love me. He just sucked really bad at showing it.

I stepped forward and gave him a hug, surprising him. "Thank you, dad," I said. "It really means a lot to me that you did this."

For a moment, he didn't return the hug, instead he just stood there. However, eventually he sighed and patted me rather awkwardly on the back. "Don't expect to get any more favors from me, Maylene, do you understand?"

I smiled, tightened the hug for a bit and then pulled away.

Aunty Maya was just standing there, looking like she was going to cry, so I walked over to her and gave her the tightest hug I could. "I'm so sorry I had to make you wait—"

"Don't worry," I said. "I understand. You were only looking out for me and you shouldn't even apologize. You did so much for me."

She pulled away, holding me an arms length away and looking at me happily. "Go," she said. "You two go. I'll explain all the fantasy nonsense to your parents and brother. You two go ahead on your own, I'm sure you have a lot of catching up to do."

I smiled at her and kissed her cheek before I said my goodbyes to everyone else and headed out with both Neferkitti and Atem, holding his hand tightly in mine.

When we left the Egyptology building we, without a doubt started heading home. It was obvious that he still remembered how to get home since he didn't need my help guiding him.

For the most part, we were quiet... I guess we were both simply enjoying each other's presence. Eventually, however, I just had to speak up. "How are you feeling?"

"Well," was his answer. "Immediately after the resurrection, I felt horrible. But now I'm well. Though I think a goodnight sleep in that bed back at your place would be excellent... air-o-planes are horrible."

I chuckled, mostly at the way he said airplane, and then hugged his arm tightly. "You can't sleep yet. You have so much to tell me."

"And I'm sure you have so much to tell me."

Then we fell silent again. It was only after we got home and sat at the couch where we had spent so much time, so long ago, that we actually started to talk.

Well... saying we talked would be a lie.

The first thing I did the moment we sat down was kiss his lips. I kissed him rather greedily, almost as if I was trying to make up for all the years that I hadn't been able to kiss him. My heart was pounding in my chest and I wanted nothing more than to just hold him forever. But for now, I just pushed him back against the arm of the couch, getting on top of him and deepening the kiss.

While he ran one of his hands through my hair, his other brushed softly against my cheek, tracing over my cheekbone.

I held his face in my hands, using my fingers to memorize his features all over again, just like I had during the nights on that boat. He hadn't changed much at all, unlike me.

I had grown taller, slightly thinner and my hair was longer. He, however, felt the same. He had the same, square jaw, the same chiseled features and even the same amount of stubble on his face from not shaving. He was the same, and it made me so happy.

When I finally pulled my lips away from his, I smoothed his hair back from his face and dropped my forehead onto his.

My lips were only an inch away from his, and it took some effort to not just kiss

him again. "I feel like I'm gonna wake up and you'll be gone."

"Has that happened before?" He asked, his voice was soft and his smile was rueful.

"A couple times."

"It won't happen again. Not this time, and I'm sorry," he said. "I'm sorry for everything."

I let out a breath before sitting up on his lap, touching the ankh necklace that was still around his neck. This necklace saved his life, so seeing it on him was relieving.

"You've become so beautiful, May. More beautiful than before."

I felt my cheeks warm up even more, and just on queue, some of my hair tumbled down over my shoulder. I knew he loved my hair, and unsurprisingly, he reached out and touched it.

"I'm not as stupid as I am ugly?" I asked, referring to what he said to me oh-so-long ago.

Almost immediately he rolled his eyes. "Why do you *still* remember that?"

I shrugged, "you hurt my feelings, you know?"

"May, you are *not* stupid *or* ugly. You are the most beautiful, most intelligent girl I know," he said. "I already apologized for saying that so let it go."

"Fine, fine," I said. "I was just making sure, anyways."

He gave me a funny look, which made me chuckle. "Maybe we should... talk now," I suggested.

He smiled, looking up at me as he put one of his hands behind his head. "Am I still your husband?"

I laughed at the question, "sorry... not in this world. You're gonna have to get married to me all over again."

With his free hand, he grabbed my hand and knotted his fingers with mine. "That's fine, I suppose. Though I don't see why our marriage in Egypt lacks legitimacy here."

I giggled before leaning forward and kissing him again, my heart racing so happily that it hurt. In a good way, of course.

"I thought you said we should talk?" he whispered against my lips when I pulled away to stroke his nose with mine.

I smiled, kissing his lips once more before I spoke. "It's fine. I'll never let you leave me again. I don't care which gods come down and try to steal you away from me, you're not going anywhere. So we have the rest of our lives now to talk, right?"

His breathing was steady and his breath warm against my skin as he watched me carefully. "Right," he said. "You're right. We have the rest of our lives."

"Right now, I just want to kiss you. Okay?"

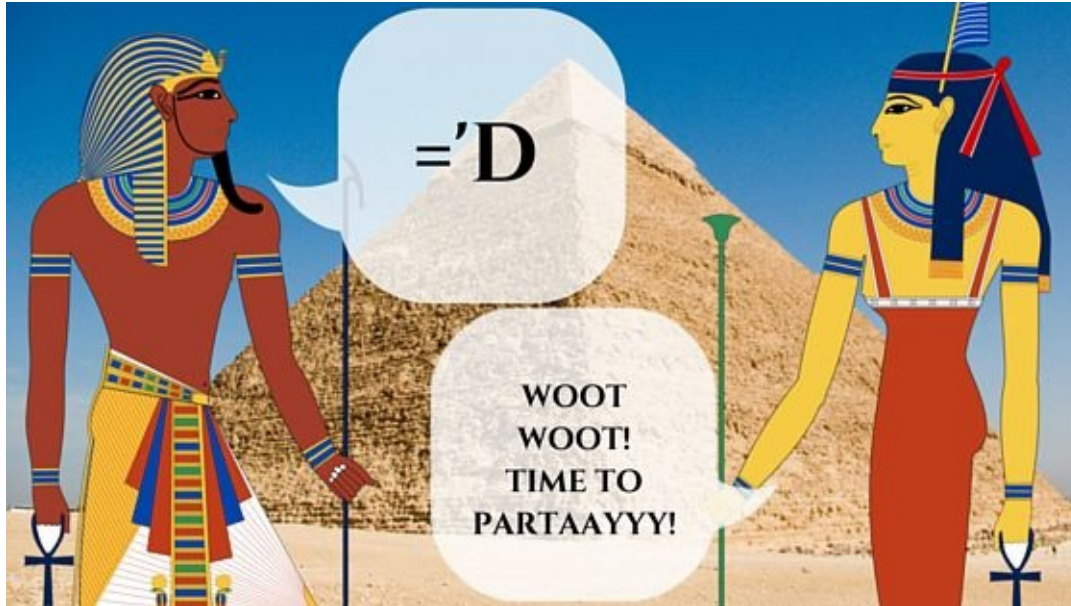
"Just kisses?" He asked, his hands reaching down and holding my waist, making my heart skip a beat.

"Just kisses."

He laughed softly. "I love you, May Khan."

"I love you too," I smiled against his lips as I said it, "my Pharaoh."

~ † ~



HEY EVERYONE!!!

NO WORRIES IT IS NOT DONE JUST YET!!!!!!!!!! HEHE! Don't forget to vote and comment and follow if you enjoyed the update!!! Let me know what you think!!!! =D

AS FOR THE CONTEST THINGY-MA-BOB!

A lot more people have said that they'd like to give it a shot so I'm so happy to hear that!!!! Here's more info on that:

RULES:

- 1) Send me a private message saying telling me you're interested in creating some sort of artwork related to this story! I will send you my email address in the private message and you can email it to me!**
- 2) Once you have emailed it to me, make sure you send me another private message here saying you've sent it! (Sometimes my email can be a jerk LOL!)**

3) Enjoy my heartfelt thank you and love for the time you took to make whatever you made!!! =D

DEADLINE:

I'm going to make the deadline *FRIDAY JUNE 10th, 2016!!* Please send it to me before then!

PRIZE

If we have enough submissions, and there does end up being a prize, it's going to be a free copy of my self-published book!!!! =D The winner will be selected through a DRAW!!!! For more info on the book itself, please keep scrolling down! xD

~ † ~

THE BOOK

SO YES! I am trying to self-publish Beauty and the Pharaoh for you lovely folk who loved it enough to maybe want to have a copy in your personal library one day!

Unfortunately, since I'm super broke (as most students are), I'm going through the editing process on my own (and with the help of my family), which is why it's taking so long ='(. And since it's not going to be edited professionally, it'll never be completely perfect, however I'm still going to try my best!

I'll keep you updated on that, but I hope you guys are as excited as I am!!!!!!! =D

As always, thank you so much for your support <3 Don't forget to follow and comment and vote!

Love,

Luckycharms <3



Epilogue

Hi guys!!

If you haven't already, please don't forget to FOLLOW :D <3

Please also post your review on Goodreads, that would really help me a lot!!:

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/42192129-beauty-and-the-pharaoh>

Thank you, and enjoy the epilogue!!

Love,

Luckycharms

I sat down on a bench before laughing at the rare sight of Atem playing with a child. Today, we were given the task of babysitting Kiya, who was five now. Apparently, Auntie Maya had promised her to take her to the park, but she caught a cold and Uncle Ethan was extremely busy with work.

Thus, Atem, Neferkitti and I came to the rescue.

And that was no hair off our back since Atem *loved* Kiya.

Despite the fact that I had known him for so long, including the four years of him being gone, I never imagined how good he would be with kids. Though I guess I shouldn't have been too surprised, he practically raised his own little brother, after all.

The thought of this made me put my hand over my relatively flat belly, happy to know that if I were to have a child, he'd be an excellent father.

The sky was beginning to turn red and orange as the sun started to set, and since I had the fitness level of an old grandma, a couple hours in I was exhausted, which was why I took refuge at the bench. Neferkitti, joined me to keep me company. Atem however, well, he could keep going all night if he wanted to.

"I'm *going* to catch you!" Kiya shouted with a grin on her face as she ran after Atem.

Atem wasn't running fast, so Kiya grabbed a hold of his shirt with ease. He pulled away and gave her an exaggerated glare while he did the superhero stance. "You are no match for me, child," he said, making me snort. "You mustn't forget that I was the Pharaoh of Egypt. I've led thousands of soldiers into war and defeated—"

Kiya pounced on him, giggling uncontrollably. She loved it when he started his 'don't mess with me' rant.

I laughed out loud as Atem purposefully collapsed onto the sand covered ground of the park, letting Kiya climb on top of him and throw her hands up into the air. "Victory!"

Atem put an arm over his face. "I cannot believe it," he sighed. "You have defeated me *again*."

Neferkitti jumped off the bench from beside me, rushing over to them and pouncing on Atem too while Kiya gave Atem a kiss on his cheek. "I'll give you one more chance!" She said, holding her finger up. Once the game was over, she always gave him another chance, and every time they played together he would always break it and be the bad guy who needed to be defeated.

Atem chuckled.

I watched as Atem got up while lifting the only two girls in this world that he would ever be so silly with in his arms. Neferkitti and Kiya. I was very jealous of those two.

"I appreciate your kindness," Atem said to Kiya. "But for now I think it's time to go home."

Kiya protested a little but since she always listened to Atem, she gave up pretty quickly. When Atem reached me, Neferkitti jumped into my arms and I stood up. "Ready?"

Both Atem and Kiya nodded and with that, we all walked home together. After dropping Kiya off, Neferkitti walked elegantly in front of us, not needing a leash or anything of the sort. She was definitely worthy of being a Queen. That would never change.

It's been two years since Atem's come back home and strangely enough, not much has changed. He had the same personality, as always, which was great in my opinion. I guess in a sense it helped to make me think he never really left.

One thing that did change was that my entire family was rather accepting of him. Even my father. My father had a strange appreciation for Atem and though they barely ever talked, I could simply tell by the look on my father's face that he tolerated him. And toleration was a thousand times better than nothing when it came to my dad.

It took a while for Ro and Alec and Blake to grow comfortable with him again since they never ended up getting their memories back. But they did soon enough and eventually, their relationship was great again. Blake even began taking Atem to the gym again, which was awesome.

And of course, there was Grandma Seetha. Grandma Seetha grew to love Atem almost instantly. It kind of felt like she actually remembered him and I thought that maybe it was because she was older and wiser.

Overall, the last two years were wonderful. We still fought all the time, but we made up very quickly. We would read together when we got the chance. And we would do what we could to make up for the time we lost. Strangely enough, despite all the imperfections in our relationship... I felt like everything was absolutely perfect.

So I walked by his side, holding his hand tightly with a smile on my face. Walks like this were nice, where we just silently enjoyed each other's presence. Right now was even more awesome since it was quiet and the sky was beautiful and the weather was perfect.

"We should hurry up and have a child," Atem suddenly said.

With the peaceful, silent walk disturbed, I looked at him in shock.

Well wasn't that sudden?

"You're old enough now, aren't you?" He asked. "In your time, at least. In Egypt, twenty-six would be middle aged. You're an old lady."

"Well in that case, you're an old man."

"Exactly. I'd like to have a child before I die, thank you." He said it in a matter-of-fact tone, which made me laugh. "I'm serious, May."

I let out a breath, looking straight ahead.

"Don't you want children?" His voice was suddenly gentle, making my heart skip a beat.

"Well yeah," I said. "But I'd prefer we get married first."

"We *are* married," he mumbled to himself in annoyance.

"We have to get married *here*."

"Fine," he said. "What does that entail? A grand banquet with hundreds of guests and a white dress?"

I chuckled. "Yeah, but first you have to propose. You have to get down on one knee with a diamond ring and ask me to marry you."

He looked at me in disbelief. "That sounds *ridiculous*."

"That's how you propose here!" I argued.

"Why do I need to get on a knee and ask you with an expensive ring?" He asked.

"That sounds more like trying to bribe you into marrying me."

I hesitated. For the first time in my life, I thought about that and realized how right he was. It *did* seem like that, didn't it?

And of course, it was completely like Atem to take age old traditions and throw them out the window like it was trash.

"Why can't I just *ask* you to marry me? Why is that not acceptable?"

I rolled my eyes and stopped walking, turning to face him. "Fine, *ask* me to marry you... But you have to ask me the same way you did in Egypt."

I saw a hint of red forming on his cheeks. "That was years ago," he argued. "How am I supposed to remember what I said?"

"Well, remember," I responded, stubbornly. "I'm not going to marry you unless you ask me properly."

He tried to keep a straight face but gave up almost immediately. After taking a couple breaths and kicking his enormous ego to the curb for only a short while, he sighed. "I love you," he said, cheeks reddening even more. "I gave up everything to come here and be with you because of that. I was locked up in a tomb all alone for thousands of years with the hope that *maybe* one day I could be with you again. I may miss my previous life here and there but I do not regret my choice even one bit. I'd rather be here as a measly peasant rather than in Egypt as an all-powerful king if it meant being with you. So will you not, at the very least, do me the honor of being my wife... in this world too?"

Honor, huh? I smiled, my heart racing in joy. "Now there's my surprisingly poetic Tem," I grinned, holding both his hands in mine.

He rolled his eyes. "Will you or will you not?"

"Well, I have good news and bad news—"

He looked annoyed. "This is a yes or no question, May."

"Which do you want to hear first?"

After a moment of hesitation, he let out an annoyed huff. "The bad news."

"The bad news is that though I *will* do you the honor of being your wife, we're going to be hell-a swamped for the next week or so while we rush to plan this wedding. We have to get married as soon as possible."

One of his eyebrows arched. "Then what's the good news?"

I smiled before stepping forward and kissing his lips. When I pulled away, I wrapped my arms around his neck and watched his expression for a moment before I spoke. "I might already be pregnant."

His eyes widened and his lips began to smile. "Really?" It came out as a shocked whisper.

I nodded. "I wasn't going to tell you until I was certain," I said, arms still around his shoulders. "But I missed my period last month and this month—"

He kissed my lips and when I felt his excitement, my heart began to flutter. When he pulled away, he hugged me so tightly that I couldn't breath. "You should have told me right away," he said. "Whether you were sure or not."

I let out a chuckle and hugged him back, allowing myself to be suffocated. When he finally released me, I grabbed a hold of his hand and we started to walk again. "We have to get married quick," I said. "I don't want my family to realize I've been having premarital sex."

It seemed like he didn't hear that. "Her name shall be Neferankh."

That surprised me. "Her?"

"I think she will be a girl," he said. "No, I am certain."

"You can't be sure of that, Atem," but then almost immediately after I said it I decided to take it back in my head. After all the magic and spiritual power and nonsense that I've dealt with in my life since I met him, maybe he could *just* know. "What does Neferankh even mean?" That would be kind of an odd name in our society.

"Beautiful life," Atem said with a smile. "Neferankh."

I thought about that and then began to nod. I liked it. I liked that name a lot.

Beautiful life, huh? What a perfect name for the future daughter of the once cruel and misguided Pharaoh Akhenatem. And in a sense, maybe it was also a perfect name for the daughter of a previously rather simple girl who once never knew what love and life really even meant.

That would be the perfect name.

Neferkitti, who had walked quite the distance ahead of us, stopped to turn around and look. I saw her meow before she continued on her merry way. I wondered then if she realized that she was going to have a human sister soon, but knowing her magical self, she probably knew well before I even did. Maybe that's why she's been keeping me company more than usual these days.

"You are carrying the Princess of Egypt," Atem said before he let out a sad sigh.

I chuckled before putting an arm around his waist and pulling myself close to him as we walked. "You only wish," I kinda did too, the thought was a nice one.

When I felt his lips kiss my temple, I looked at him with a grin. At that moment, all I felt was bliss and happiness and unbelievably satisfaction with the way that everything was turning out.

I often felt sorry for him for having to leave it all behind for me. He was right when he said that he left a life of riches and luxury just so he could be with me. Here, he was simply a translator for the Department of Egyptology at Oakville University. It was a good job, but nothing compared to the life of a Pharaoh.

No more glorious warmth of the Egyptian desert. No more sights of the beautiful River Nile. No more waking up to the sounds of people bustling around in the market not too far away from the palace. And no more falling asleep the absolute silence.

No more talking to the Royal Court who loved and protected him and was the family that could replace the one that was murdered by his evil stepmother. No more spending time with a loving, loyal, wonderful little brother who looked up to him. No more kisses from his adoring mother who did so much for him.

He didn't just leave behind his Royal Life... He left behind his actual life too.

One time as we spoke, I started to cry. I cried for him when I realized how much he had given up for me. He responded by hugging me and telling me to never cry about that ever again. He said that it was his choice. He chose to leave it all behind.

He told me that his family and the people he loved would never actually be gone. They were here watching over him... Just as Aunt Maya had stuck around and watched over me in that other life.

As for his royalty and his glory... He said none of that mattered.

But, despite that... at least, in my eyes Atem was still a magnificent, strong, noble and *kind* Pharaoh.

I really wished though that everyone could know that about him. I wish everyone could know that he wasn't a Pharaoh with a sad, lonely ending. I wish everyone could know that he not only changed history but he also changed *my* life. He was a hero... *my* hero. He made me one of the happiest girls in the world and for that, he will always be my King.

And now, to make it all even better, he was going to be a father too. He was going to be the father of my future baby girl that he would help me raise into a woman who will be as wonderful as a beautiful Egyptian princess.

"Hey," I called as I looked up at him.

He looked down at me with only love and kindness in his eyes, looking nothing like the eyes I saw when I first met him years ago.

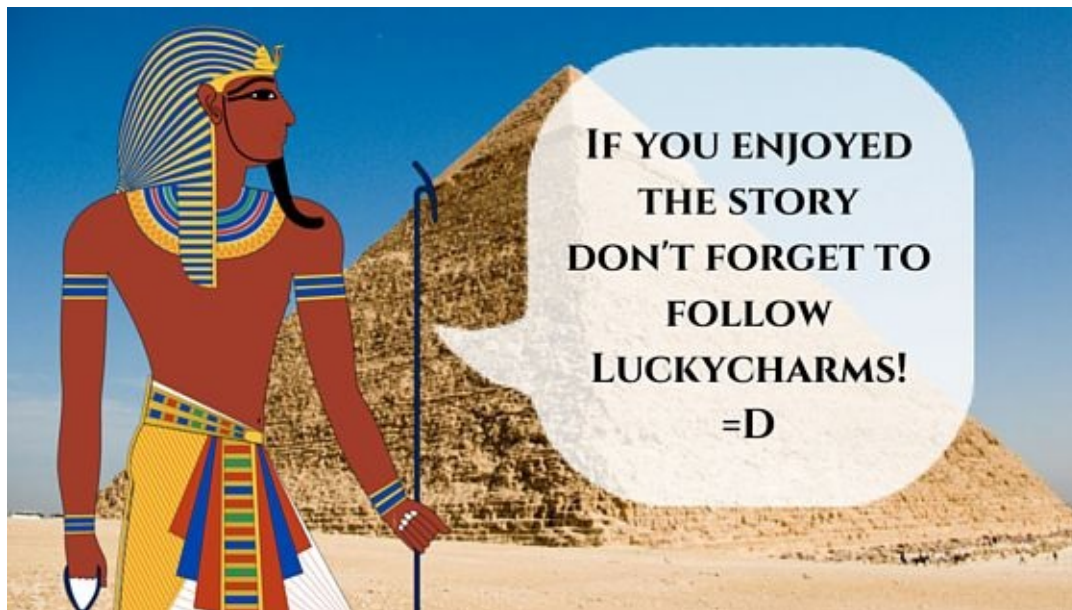
"You know, you'll *always* be a Pharaoh in my eyes," I said, honestly. "The greatest Pharaoh that ever existed."

The smile he gave me was calm and relaxed and satisfied. I could tell that my words not only pleased him, but it seemed like he wanted nothing more than that. "That is good enough for me, my beautiful queen."

- The End -

~ † ~

And there we have it folks! The end of Beauty and the Pharaoh!! Thanks so much for sticking through the story till the very end! It means THE WORLD to me!!!!





***** IMPORTANT PLEASE READ*****

MOVING FORWARD:

So I know this is the last chapter of this book, but I *am* planning on uploading more chapters to continue on with their stories. I wouldn't say

that it's going to be the sequel or anything like that... but it's definitely going to continue on with their future and it's more so just for fun!

My estimate is that there will be able four or five chapters added to this story over the span of the next couple months, so keep checking in =D! The first continued addition will be NEXT FRIDAY! =D Hope you're excited!

As for the CONTEST: I will have an update for that by MONDAY JUNE 13th, 2016! So those of you who sent in your pictures, you'll have more info soon! =D

LASTLY

THANK YOU SO MUCH for reading this story! It was so much fun to write and it made me so happy that so many of you actually enjoyed it!! Please stay tuned to find out when I'll have to hard copy ready for anyone who would like to have a copy of this story in their own personal libraries <3

LOVE,

LUCKYCHARMS!!!! <3 <3 <3



THANK
YOU
FOR
READING
BEAUTY
AND THE
PHARAOH



**Don't forget to check back next Friday to see the first update on their
FUTURE LIVES!!! ;D**

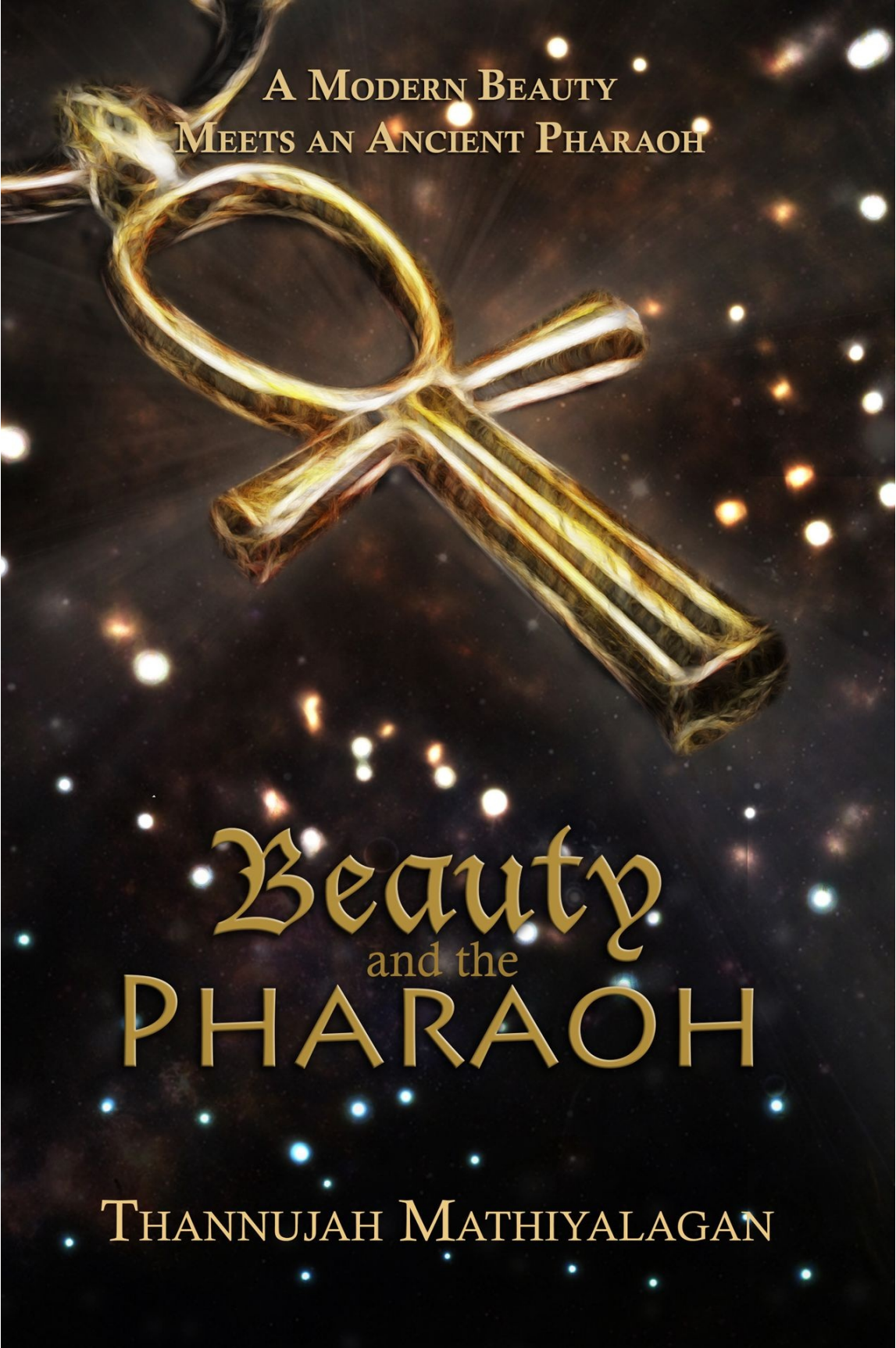


~~ **BUY NOW!** ~~

Hello friends!

It's been quite some time since I've posted here, but I'm glad to bring with me the news that you can now BUY Beauty and the Pharaoh to add to your personal library!

I hope you are as excited as I am!

A golden Ankh symbol, a common religious symbol in ancient Egyptian religion, is depicted floating in a dark, starry space. The Ankh is rendered with a metallic, reflective texture, showing highlights and shadows that give it a three-dimensional appearance. The background is a deep black, speckled with numerous small, bright stars of varying colors, including white, yellow, and blue. The overall composition is centered and balanced, with the Ankh as the primary focal point.

A MODERN BEAUTY
MEETS AN ANCIENT PHARAOH

Beauty
and the
PHARAOH

THANNUJAH MATHIYALAGAN



If you are interested, you can find the book on the following websites:

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/thannujah-mathiyalagan/beauty-and-the-pharaoh/paperback/product-23823811.html>

(I'll put the link in the comments and on my profile too so you can copy it!)

The prices (**including a 20% discount for you guys!!**) are as follows:

US: \$18.39

CA: \$24.00

**HOWEVER: UNTIL 11:59 OCTOBER 31ST, YOU CAN GET AN
ADDITIONAL 15% OFF YOUR ORDER OF BEAUTY AND THE
PHARAOH!!! So buy today!!!**



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**(I will post the link in the comments below; or you could also just type
Beauty and the Pharaoh into your Amazon search bar!)**



TAG ME!

If you do end up purchasing the book, I would LOVE to see you snap me a picture of it on instagram or twitter! You can tag me with the following usernames:

Instagram: @ thannujah_m

Twitter: @ thannujah_94

I'm so excited to see you guys holding this book!!!! :P This will literally make me the HAPPIEST PERSON EVER!!! <3



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!

The last thing I wanted to ask you all to do for me is rate and add a review of the book on Goodreads!

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/42192129-beauty-and-the-pharaoh>

I wanted to motivate you guys to do this by promising to upload **A NEW CHAPTER** retelling BATP in **ATEM'S PERSPECTIVE** for every 10 reviews!

So, the more reviews, the more of a retelling of BATP in Atem's perspective that we can get!! It will be filled with a ton of disses, confusion and snarky comments (and of course, the story of how he fell in love with May!) YAY!!!!!!



I may be pushing my luck here, but I thought that for every five copies of BATP sold, I will also post **A NEW CHAPTER** retelling BATP in **ATEM'S PERSPECTIVE!!!!**

So be sure to share it with your friends and family if you really like it!

FINALLY:



The support and love I have gotten from all of you is literally the best thing that has ever happened to me! Thank you for your patience and thank you for loving Atem and May and their story!

THANK YOU!!!!!! <3

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns! I will keep you updated with any changes!!!

Love,
Luckycharms!

The Future [1]

I was in a deep sleep... dreaming. The dream was definitely kind of weird since all it really consisted of were bright lights and soft music. However, it was peaceful and nice and I definitely did not want to be woken up.

So obviously, when I felt my body being shaken by some sort of external force, all I could do was groan and say "stop it," in my drowsy, drunken state of sleep.

"Wake up, May," I heard Atem say.

I groaned some more. "Leave me alone," I muttered. We all knew I wasn't a morning person.

Atem responded by grabbing my arms and pulling me up off the bed.

"No..." I whined. I was standing up now, hugging him with my head on his shoulder... trying to get some more sleep.

"Dear Ra, wake up, woman," he said. "We're going for a walk."

"What?" A walk? Now? What time was it?

"It's healthy," he said. "Come."

"Why?" I continued to whine.

Atem didn't waste another moment. He was practically dragging me into the washroom and when I was standing on my own feet, he closed the door and left me alone. "You have ten minutes."

Like I said before, I was not a morning person, so I rather angrily brushed my teeth and washed my face.

Though admittedly, I had fallen back asleep on the toilet for a couple minutes.

When I walked out of the washroom, Atem already had a piece of plain toast with a few fruits on a plate for me. There was also some apple juice.

"Thank you for the remarkably glorious breakfast after waking me up at five in the morning," I said, a frown on my face.

"You're welcome," was his response. "Now hurry up and eat. We'll go on a nice walk around the neighborhood and we'll have something better to eat after."

I purposely ignored him, gobbling down the piece of toast and then gulping down the juice. When I was done, we silently got up and made our way out of the building.

To be honest, being outdoors this early in the morning was actually really nice. The weather was beautiful, there weren't many people out and the birds were happily chirping. It was nice.

The only problem was that you had to wake up and get used to waking up that early in order to enjoy the experience.

And I hated waking up early.

"We're going to do this every day now," Atem said, making me turn and gawk at him.

"Why?" I whined.

"Stop whining," he said. "You *have* to. You are remarkably unhealthy and you need to be healthy now more than ever."

I knew why he was saying this, but that didn't stop me from pouting. I placed my hands over the belly that now held our three-month-old baby and sighed.

I wasn't even close to giving birth to her yet and she was already exhausting me.

"I'm not *that* unhealthy," I said. Especially now since Atem would constantly be making me these weird foods and forcing me to eat them. Apparently in the few years that Atem had stayed in Egypt, his little brother had married that special

girl of his that he was into. *And* they had two kids.

Atem suddenly had a vast knowledge of babies since he watched as his own mother passed on wise motherly knowledge to his sister-in-law.

I was no longer allowed to eat fast food, that's for sure.

Atem snorted his response to my previous statement. "I can see the lack of health on your skin, May," he said. "Pregnant women usually have this glow to them. You are lacking that."

I elbowed him hard.

I totally was glowing.

"Jerk," I muttered as I began to walk a little faster.

"I'm only saying it for your own good," he said. "And for the good of the child—"

I stuck my tongue out at him, cutting him off and making him roll his eyes. We continued our walk for about an hour before heading back home. And do you think it ended there? Nope.

These early morning walks continued on... every day. Five in the morning. I never got used to it.

Being pregnant was the strangest thing that had ever happened to me. Maybe even stranger than the entire situation with Atem being an Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh.

It was magical but sometimes horrifying and other times absolutely the best thing ever. I was either constantly blissful or constantly worried.

Atem on the other hand simply loved every moment of it. Part of the reason was because *he* wasn't the one carrying the baby yet he still got to call himself the parent. The other reason was because he usually got away with telling me what to do.

This was because all of the adult women in my life, including Aunty Maya, Grandma Seetha and my mom, loved what he was doing to me. They loved that

he was feeding me healthy stuff and they loved that he was forcing me to exercise.

I basically had no choice but to listen to him since all the wise women of my family were saying the same thing.

And he loved that. I never listened to him otherwise, after all.

After he had asked me to marry him the second time around, we got married as soon as we could. It was a super, *super* tiny wedding mostly because the both of us didn't want anything big. It literally only consisted of us and my family and friends. No more than fifty guests. Yeah, super tiny.

But that helped in our quest to get it over with as soon as we could.

Once we were officially modern day married, things went right back to normal. I told my entire family about the pregnancy a couple weeks after Atem and I got married and everyone was thrilled.

My father was surprisingly happy too... probably because he would soon have another mind who he could try to manipulate into become a lawyer. But I would deal with that later... besides, my dad and I were on good terms now, so it kind of felt bad to say mean stuff about him.

Anyhow, my point is that my life was changing drastically. It was, at the moment, a good kind of change... but who knows, maybe eventually I was going to start getting stressed out and feeling the pressure.

Of course, I could definitely worry about that when it hits me in the face. Procrastination, right?

~ † ~

I had been semi dreading the day of the first ultrasound. Yeah, I was excited, but Atem refused to even try to comprehend what the hell an ultrasound was. No matter how long I tried to spend explaining it to him, he refused to believe it.

Of course, aside from that, I was super excited. We would be finding out today if this baby truly was a girl or not!

Aunty Maya was obviously the one who joined us on our trip to the hospital for the ultrasound. My mother wanted to come too but got caught up with work. And that was fine... I totally understood now that I was a working woman too.

When we arrived, I sat rather impatiently and nervously in the waiting room. Atem flipped through some pregnancy magazines while Aunty Maya just smiled away and chit-chatted with the other new moms sitting with us.

"What are *prenatal* classes?" Atem asked me, his voice low as he stared at a page in one of the magazines he was looking at.

"They're classes that help expecting parents be ready to have their baby. They have, like, breathing exercises and stuff and give you lessons on what it's like to have your first baby."

Atem snorted. "People don't need *lessons* on how to be a parent," he said. "It's inherently within them."

I rolled my eyes.

"A woman is meant to be a mother one day, as a man is meant to be a father. It's human nature. These people are just trying to steal your money."

"Yeah, yeah, and you know everything about being a father?"

"Of course I do," Atem said, looking at me. "As the Pharaoh, I was, in a sense, the father to all my—"

"Never mind," I rolled my eyes again, knowing that I probably wouldn't win this argument. I usually never won the arguments involving him deeply analyzing the social structures or what not of my people.

"Ms. Ahmenmose," I heard a kind voice call.

That caught me off guard. I was still not used to people calling me that and to be honest, neither was Atem. I mean, his people didn't really do the last name thing, from what I know. So the both of us looked around, all confused for a moment and it was Aunt Maya who snapped us into our senses. "C'mon, princess," she grinned. "Time to see your baby."

My heart started to race as I stood up. I was suddenly dizzy and had to grab a hold of Atem's hand to make sure I didn't trip and fall or something like that. Of course, he didn't seem to mind.

He held my hand tightly as we followed the nurse into a room.

In the room, I got up onto the bed and just lay there for a bit while we waited for the ultrasound technician to come in. When she did, I started to panic even more.

This was it.

I was finally going to see if my baby was a girl... if my baby was even okay.

"Hi there, May," the pretty blonde said with a grin. "My name is Anna and I'm going to helping you out today."

"Hi, Anna," I smiled as calmly as I could.

"And you must be... Akh... Akh—"

"Atem," Aunt Maya, Atem and I said together.

The woman chuckled. "Atem," she said clearly. "And I remember you, Maya."

Aunt Maya chuckled. "Well that's very nice to hear... I was here so long ago!"

I was suddenly feeling a lot more relieved. This was the woman that did the ultrasound for Aunt Maya. Suddenly, that made her all the more credible.

"So, how does all of this work?" Atem suddenly asked. "You will be showing us images of the baby?"

I wanted to roll my eyes at the skepticism in his voice.

"How does that even work?"

"Well," Anna said as she started preparing the machine. "Basically, this machine sends sound waves, completely safe, into your wife's belly and the fetus will reflect some of the waves back to us. Through that, we're able to create an image and put it on the screen for you to see."

"And what is the benefit of all of this?"

Anna chuckled. "Well, you get to see your baby. And we can also make sure that the pregnancy is going ahead smoothly. Oh, and of course, I can probably tell you the gender."

Atem narrowed his eyes and I squeezed his hand. "Let the lady do her job, Tem."

He hesitated, but nodded as Anna smiled kindly. "Don't worry, I gest these kinds of questions all the time. You know, since the whole all natural trend is coming through."

I let out a short laugh as she rubbed some jelly over my belly. "So this is the transducer," Anna said. "I'm going to put this on your belly and it'll be a little cool, okay?"

I nodded.

Despite the warning, I let out a little gasp as she put it on my belly... it was colder than I thought. But as she started to move the transducer around, I held my breath and stared at the screen.

"Now let's see... ah, there we go. Do you see?"

My mouth started to open and I knew Aunty Maya was tearing up.

"There's its head. Look at that, this one's going to be a genius."

I chuckled.

Her head *was* huge.

"Alright, it's still *a little* too early to find out what the gender is for sure... but from what I'm seeing now it looks like you two are having a baby girl!"

I looked at Atem, who was just staring at the image and gaping. "Did you hear that?" I asked.

He just kept gaping.

"Okay, let me just capture a picture for you... right, perfect," Anna smiled. "That's it, do you have any questions?"

"You can't show us any clearer images of the face?" Atem asked.

"Not yet," Anna said as she used a towel to wipe the jelly off my stomach. "But when you come in for your next ultrasound, I can *definitely* show you some more defined features. So be excited."

Atem let out a breath.

As we left the hospital, I stared at the picture of Neferankh with a grin on my face. Suddenly, all of this felt even more real than it was before.'

"That was remarkable," Atem said. "I can't believe your people have the ability to do this."

"I told you!" I said.

Aunt Maya chuckled. "You think this is cool? Wait till you come in for the next ultrasound. You'll be able to see her with so much clarity."

I grinned some more, excited and thrilled and nervous and everything all at the same time.

Man, they were *not* kidding when they said that pregnancy hormones mess with your emotions.

When we got home, Atem practically spent most, if not all of the evening just staring at the picture that Anna had given us of our future baby.

When I walked into our bedroom with some strawberries, he was sitting at our bed, Neferkitti resting beside him, as he stared at the picture. He held the picture up when he noticed me and pointed at her face. "I think I can see an eye."

I chuckled as I climbed into bed next to him, placing the strawberries between us. "Can I see?"

He handed it to me and pointed near the face. "See?"

I couldn't see anything. I think it was too early to see eyes and stuff, but I just smiled. "Yeah."

He took the picture back and stared at it some more. "Do you think she is *actually* this tiny?"

"No, she has to be a little bit bigger. Maybe the size of my fist?"

"That's *tiny*."

"I guess... but they grow so fast," I leaned against the headboard and placed my hands on my belly. "I bet you that tomorrow she's gonna be double the size."

Atem chuckled as he put an arm around me. "I left the palace for a little over a week while my sister-in-law was pregnant and when I returned she was double the size. It was unbelievable."

I let out a laugh but then sighed. "I don't know how I'm going to do it, Atem. Six months... that's a long time. And I'm just going to get bigger and bigger—"

"You'd be a fool to worry, May," was his response. "Child birth is the most natural thing in the world. It's been happening for thousands of years. A woman's body is amazing in that sense. It carries a life and then when the life is ready it comes out and then the women go right back to work. Maybe they do it again, maybe they don't... don't be a fool and underestimate your capabilities."

I let out a sigh and dropped my head onto his shoulder.

He was right.

My mom did it, twice. Auntie Maya did it too. And so did every other mother in this entire world and the history of the human race.

I could do this.

He held up the picture again and looked at it. "By the looks of this picture, I think she's going to have your nose."

I rolled my eyes. "You can't tell that yet!" I grabbed the picture and looked at it. "It's way too early."

Atem let out a chuckle before kissing my temple. "Well, I hope she *does* look like you," he said. He then pulled away and hesitated. "Actually... if that's the case then the suitors will keep coming in—"

I nudged him hard. "You are such a loser," I said. What a flirt.

He smiled. "To avoid the issue with the suitors, I pray to the gods that she has *my* eyes. I want her to scare away the ass-holes, as you call them, with a single look."

To be honest, I think that'd be a good thing too. "She'd be like Aurora, sort of."

"Exactly what we need."

This time, I didn't know if he was being sarcastic or not. But nonetheless I laughed and kissed his lips. "Six months to go and we'll find out," I said when I pulled away.

He suddenly started to frown. "I don't know why but suddenly I felt a worry rush through me."

"It's because you're going to be a daddy and she hasn't even been born yet but you're already worrying about the suitors."

Atem chuckled. "I shouldn't worry about that," he said. "I should just let her be a

child, right?"

I nodded.

He sighed. "I want her to have the childhood that I never had," he said, making me let out a breath. "Not a single worry in the world."

"She will, 'Tem," I said, truly believing it. "I know she will. She'll have everything in the world. A nice home, great friends, food, love, fun... and an amazing father."

He kissed my lips again and I could feel his relief. When he pulled away, he smiled. "And don't forget... she'll also have an amazing and loving mother."

~ † ~

HELLO EVERYONE!!!!!!

I hope you enjoyed the first part of the "FUTURE" of May and Atem! This is kind of just the chapter to start up the next couple so I hope you enjoyed. Sorry for taking so long to update! Things have been a little bit of a mess at home and a lot has been going on! xD

AS FOR THE BOOK!

It is STILL being edited but that's going pretty well! Hopefully it will be done and ready as soon as possible and I will definitely let you all know

when it is!

****** AS FOR THE CONTEST! ******

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SENT ME THE PICTURES!!!!!!
They were all AWESOME! And that is exactly why I picked the winner
through a draw!!!! There was no way that I could pick a favourite because
they were all so amazing! I absolutely loved how everyone had their own
unique image of May and Atem, yet at the same time they were similar!
That made me so happy!!!

AN IMPORTANT NOTE: I was thinking of uploading and sharing the
pictures you sent me ON HERE! If you, for whatever reason, don't want me
to share your picture, please send me a message and I will totally
understand!

NOW FOR THE WINNER AS PICKED THROUGH A DRAW:

DRUMROLL

[Wildalura](#)

CONGRATULATIONS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

HEHE! =D

Again, ALL of your pictures were FANTABULOUS! I loved them all so
much and they made me SO HAPPY! I have them all saved on my phone
and I look through them A LOT! ='D So thank you to everyone who
participated!

I will have more info an the prize ASAP! Don't worry, I won't forget! Hehe!

Please don't forget to send me a message and let me know for sure on whether or not you want me to post the picture up in the story =D

Thank you!!!!!!! <3

Love y'all,

Luckycharms <3



The Future [2]

I swear it felt like I was going to explode any moment now. My belly was the size of a basketball and a half and thanks to how huge it was, I had officially forgotten how my feet looked like.

Despite the fact that I barely ever wanted to get out of bed in the morning, you could imagine that Atem would not let that happen. He didn't cut me any slack, even when my pregnancy hormones kicked in and I started my bawling my eyes out because of how tired I was.

Nothing could shake this man.

I guess in the end it was for my own good... because I have to admit... when *that moment* came, it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be.

It was around six in the evening and I was having a glass of water in the kitchen when I felt water trickling down the side of my legs.

I froze.

At first I thought I peed myself... which, by the way, *had* happened once (thank god no one was home). But when I stepped away and looked at the water that had now accumulated on the floor, I saw that it was clear.

Clear... and still continuing to drip down my legs underneath my skirt.

"Um... Atem..."

Atem had just gotten home from work and from the sound that I was hearing in the bathroom, he was still taking a shower.

"Um..." I hesitated.

It didn't hurt at all but I couldn't stop it. It just continued to pour down from between the middle of my legs as if some sort of tap had broken down there.

"Atem!" I called loudly.

The water shut off in the washroom and there was a pause. "What?" His voice echoed.

"I... um... I think my water broke?"

I awkwardly continued to step away, leaving a trail of water... my huge belly making it a little difficult to see the floor. By the time Atem burst out of the washroom, however, it had stopped.

He was wet and still in his towel as he rushed towards me. "*What?*"

"My water broke."

"You feel no pain?"

I shook my head. I read in a book that often times women were already well into labor when their water would break. Why wasn't I feeling any pain?

But then... as we both stared at each other... I think it really hit me...

"I'm going into labor..." panic rose as I whispered those words.

Atem was already running to our bedroom in his towel to grab his phone to probably call Aunty Maya.

I started to panic, beginning to take deep breaths. What was wrong with me? Why wasn't I feeling any pain yet? Was I actually going into labor? Was my baby okay? Was she already on her way out? My water broke! Should I start pushing?

I grabbed a hold of the kitchen counter as I heard Atem telling Aunty Maya what was going on. After another moment, Atem came rushing out of the bedroom in a pair of jeans as he threw on a shirt. "Aunty Maya is coming."

"Should I change?" It was when I spoke that I realized I was hyperventilating.

"Calm down," Atem said, though he himself did not look the least bit calm.
"And yes... go clean yourself up and take a hot shower... do you need help?"

I shook my head. No. I didn't need help. Was that a bad thing?

So I went into the washroom, took off all my clothes and started my hot shower.

Aunty Maya had arrived very quickly. When I was done my shower and changed, I walked out to see her packing a small bag with clothes and stuff for me. "Hey honey," she grinned excitedly. "Are you okay?"

I nodded. "I don't feel any pain," I said, panicked. "Is that a bad thing?"

"No... don't get too excited. It'll start soon. Some women have it easier than others at the beginning," she said. "I blame it on the fact that Atem forced you to stay healthy."

I wanted to groan, but didn't. I guess this was better than feeling too much pain.

But like Aunty Maya had said, within a couple hours, I was feeling it. At first, it was kind of like period cramps... but as it continued... oh my dear Lord.

It was a kind of pain that you knew you couldn't do anything about. It didn't necessarily *hurt* a lot... it was just so uncomfortable. So I stood there in my living room, pacing and awkwardly groaning every time I felt the pain.

My mother and Ro were also here now, and while Aurora cheered me on, both my mother and Aunty Maya sat staring at the timers on their phone.

When I took a deep breath and let out another groan, my mom and aunt looked at each other. "That was about four minutes, right?" My mom asked.

Aunty Maya nodded. "That's what I got too."

The two women stood up. "Okay, time to go to the hospital, honey," my mom said.

I felt relieved but at the same time, terrified.

Atem was clearly also panicking. Every moan and groan that came out of me led

to him freaking out and asking multiple questions.

Despite the fact that he seemed to know so much about pregnancy thanks to his sister-in-law... apparently the actual giving birth part was something he wasn't allowed to completely understand. Apparently in Egypt, the actual giving birth part was only witnessed by women.

When Atem heard my moms words, he panicked more. "The hospital? Why? What's wrong? Don't you only go there when bad things happen?"

I rolled my eyes, holding my belly and taking a deep breath. "Atem, calm down. We talked about this." We had. His state of clear panic was obviously clouding his usually smart brain.

He hesitated and then nodded. "Right."

And then we were off.

When we got to the hospital, I was sat in a wheelchair and wheeled towards the delivery room as I took deep breaths. In and out. I tried not to be a wus... mostly because I kind of wanted to prove to Atem that I was as strong as all those Egyptian women he talked about.

Every time I had any sort of first-world problem related to pregnancy, he would always bring up the fact that women in Egypt never worried about that kind of stuff.

So instead of crying in pain or screaming or anything of the sort, I just took deep breaths.

I could do this.

I was a strong woman.

In the delivery room, Atem, my aunt and mom came in. Ro, unfortunately, had to wait outside since only three guests could be in there. But by the time we got there, Uncle Ethan, Kiya, my father, my brother, Alec and Blake had arrived. So at least she had company in the waiting room.

But as they waited...

I squeezed tightly onto Atem's hand, nearly ripping it off, while the doctor and my aunt and my mom cheered me on.

And after more hours than I imagined it would have taken, and no drugs whatsoever...

I gave birth to a baby girl.

Neferankh.

~ † ~

I was exhausted. By the time it was over, it was extremely early in the morning and I was ready to just knock out. To be honest... I didn't really think I was ready to have a child throughout this pregnancy. I mean, that didn't mean I didn't want a child, but I wondered if I was really ready for this. I mean... Atem would finally have someone in this world who would actually be his really family... his blood... but I wasn't sure how ready *I* was, personally.

But when I heard the cries of my baby for the first time, I swear something changed.

You hear stories like this all the time... but you never really get it until it happens to you.

When the doctor handed me my little, tiny baby... the world stopped.

I was a mother now... my entire world had changed.

In my arms was a beautiful little baby girl with a full head of black hair and eyes as dark as Atem's. She didn't cry for too long, so when she finished, she stared at us with wide eyes.

She was perfect.

And then... as I watched Atem hold our baby in awe, as I watched him become a

father... I think something changed between us too.

I didn't think I could ever be more in love with someone, but here I was.

Everything had changed.



ONE MILLION READ SPECIAL!!!!!!

HELLO EVERYONE!!!

Thank you SO MUCH for ONE MILLION READS!!!!

As a thank you to you all for supporting me, I will be releasing Atem's side of the story on Wattpad for you guys to enjoy!!!

ONE MILLION READ SPECIAL!!

Finding
PHARAOH

THANNUJAH MATHIYALAGAN

The plan is to release Finding Pharaoh some time in January! I hope you're excited!!

**While you wait, I would be absolutely HONOURED if you could
go back and make sure you have voted for all the chapters!**
That would really help the story out and it would mean the world to me!

Also, don't forget that you can purchase Beauty and the Pharaoh on Lulu. (Link in the comments section)

It would also be wonderful if you could go share your comments on the book on Goodreads! (Link in the comments section)

THANK YOU!!!!!! <3

**P.S. LET ME KNOW IN THE COMMENTS WHAT YOU'RE EXCITED
FOR!!!**

Also, I am still in the process of writing it, so feel free to share any ideas or any parts you want FOR SURE to be retold in Atem's perspective!



P.P.S. If you want to support me more, I'd LOVE IT if you followed me art
instagram: @ thannu.draws

Hehe!

#blacklivesmatter

Hi everyone,

As you all know, this is a story that focuses heavily on Ancient Egypt, an African, black culture that existed years ago. Though Ancient Egypt does not 'exist' as a dominant culture today, its beauty and glory has literally and figuratively pushed through the ages so that we can love and admire it even now.

Like most of you, I'm a huge admirer of Ancient Egypt and do everything I can to make sure that I know as much about the topic as I can before writing about it. The thing is, I want to make sure that 'knowing much about it' is equivalent to respecting and loving black people and black culture.

The world is super crazy right now, and rightfully so, with protests filling the streets because our brothers and sisters are sick and tired of the treatment and the lack of equality that they have experience for hundreds of years. *I am not black*, but I want to be an ally in the best way I can because I know what it feels like to come from a group that has suffered from discrimination and violence, and I have also been following the movement for years and I too am sick and tired of what's going on.

So, I wanted to take a moment to share some resources with everyone so that you too learn more about what's going on in regards to #blacklivesmatter

Donating:

If you have the ability to do so, please provide some support to those fighting for

their rights. In the world we live in, monetary aid is significant and could do so much for the cause.

A good resource which shows ways on how you can do so is here:
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CAXaV7qlfQx/?igshid=umuqf2j0uyvu>

Learning:

If you do not have the means to donate, that is totally fair and understandable. An alternative is to use your voice and raise awareness, but also learn the importance of being an ally and being anti-racist.

There are a lot of ways to educate yourself on systematic racism, colonialism and historical situations that have led us to the place we're at now. Some of them include some good documentaries, movies, books, podcasts, etc. You can talk to friends or family members who can share their experiences with you, or you can do the work on your own. Whatever the case, I found a good post that shares some great places to start educating yourself:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CAvbZyVh1xc/?igshid=1jh9gvafytghy>

From the list above, some popular movies and documentaries for you to start with, if you are just beginning your exploration of this topic are: When They See Us, The Hate U Give and 13th.

A REMARKABLE podcast that shows the importance of discussion and education is Joe Rogan's podcast with the incredible Daryl Davis. If you don't know him already, Daryl Davis is an activist who uses his words and intellect to 'convert' and educate KKK members : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGTQ0Wj6yIg&t=1s>

I find that educations and understanding is always the best place for people to start in regards to any world issues. Ignorance is the enemy, always. Once you have started your learning, you will know what is right and know how to proceed when it comes to helping those in need.

So let's learn from each other, support each other and help our friends, our brothers and sisters who we *must* love and respect, get the rights and equal treatment that they have always deserved.

We are in this together.

If you have any questions or would like me to point you in the direction of more resources, feel free to send me a message. If you want to share more resources, I'd love to see them in the comments. I'm always willing to learn more and I'm sure other's will appreciate it too.

Love, Luckycharms <3

P.S. I will post the links in the comments so you can click on them.

For more information: blacklivesmatter.com

When the cruel Pharaoh Akhenatem is cursed for his crimes and thrown thousands of years into the future, he smashes head first into the life of May, forcing her normal school girl world to disappear well past the point of no return.

Thanks to a strange vision and the teachings of her aunt, May decides that it is her duty to take care of this unpleasant and annoying jerk of a man.

She had no idea what she was signing up for.



With the help of her kind and selfless nature, an unexpected love finds the both of them as May comes to realize that evil is not as simple of a concept as it seems and everyone has their own story.

wattpad

Read more at: www.wattpad.com/luckycharms

